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# REIGN — OF — FIRE

Volume 34 Number 5

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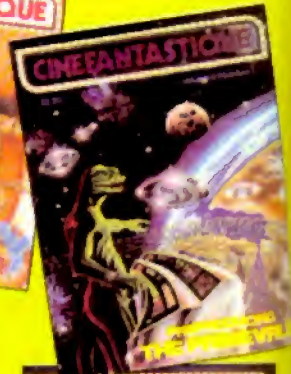
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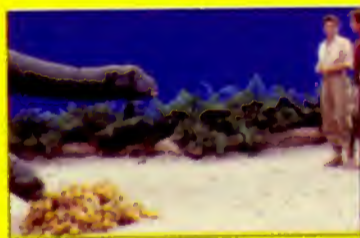
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GODZILLA 1956 vs. 1998



BABY, 1985



LOCH NESS, 1995



JURASSIC PARK  
1993



LAND OF THE LOST,  
1974 vs. 1991



# CONTENTS

VOLUME 34 NUMBER 5

"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

AUGUST 2002

Anybody up for busting a few mythological icons?

Dragons, for instance. Open up a particular, assembly-line grade of fantasy novel, and there they are: big and glorious and fire-breathing and gratuitous as all get-out. Sometimes the author makes them sentient; sometimes they're not even the bad guys. Almost always, their deployment is as predictable as the mints Hilton plunks onto pillows. What if the cliché was stood on its head? What if dragons were less regal adversary than worldwide pestilence, and instead of presiding over medieval ages, they infested an uncertain future? That's the intriguing question posed by ex-X-FILES helmer Rob Bowman and his crew in the upcoming feature, **REIGN OF FIRE**. As author **Andrew Osmond** discovers, it may be enough to provide a new perspective on those scaly old flame-spewers.

Now take vampires. Granted, Anne Rice broke the mold a few decades ago with her Lestat novels, but since then, the amoral, androgynous, charismatic bloodsucker who's anathema to humankind yet a hero within the context of his own life has become something of its own cliché. What if that beautiful, powerful figure was ramped down a bit? What if vampires cut a more ordinary, even banal, presence; what if their agenda was less clear-cut evil? A few years ago, the British series **ULTRAVIOLET** presented such a conundrum, and the results were so compelling that, with the show's recent release on DVD, we had to dispatch **Paula Vitaris** to meet with the program's creators. In her feature article, she discovers what it takes to bring Nosferatu into the 21st century.

As an item of both art and commerce, film is frequently a victim of the derivative impulse. It takes the active mind of the artist and the courage of the financial backers not to follow the already established path, but to seek newer, riskier insights into the human condition. **REIGN OF FIRE** and **ULTRAVIOLET** are the newest examples of such icon busters. We need more.

—Dan Persons



Page 12



Page 16



Page 34



Page 46



Page 50

## 6 TOM MCCAMUS

He's the man you don't want to cross in **MUTANT X**. **Miwa Hirai** talks to the actor about his plastic-coated, Warhol-bewigged bad guy.

## 8 TOM SAVINI

He has become legendary for his creatively gory makeup effects, yet Tom Savini's skills are not only latex-deep. **Mike Watt** discovers what the multi-faceted film artist has been up to.

## 12 EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS

Giant spiders are on the march, and, no, you're not supposed to take this latest entry out of Roland Emmerich's and Dean Devlin's **Centropolis** Entertainment seriously. **Chuck Wagner** finds out what it takes to get all those CG arachnids moving.

## 14 THE DANGEROUS LIVES OF ALTER BOYS

It ain't pederast priests, but their own, comic-infused imaginations that pose the greatest threat, and the most likely salvation. **Dan Scapperotti** talks with Todd McFarlane about bringing the fantasy sequences of this Jodie Foster-produced period piece to life.

## 16 REIGN OF FIRE

They're big, they're hungry, they're fire-breathing. They are, in a word, dragons, and according to former X-FILES director Rob Bowman, they're no longer a medieval myth but a tangible threat to humanity. **Andrew Osmond** talks with the creators about bringing an ancient evil to a tenuous future.

## 28 GOLDMEMBER

Austin Powers is back, this time teaming up with fellow '70s refugee Foxy Cleopatra to foil the plans of the titular bad guy, a man who really does have a golden gun. **Ed Gross** fleshes out the story.

## 30 HALLOWEEN: RESURRECTION

If you can't kill him, mass-market him. The franchise hits the Web as an Internet entrepreneur tries to leverage the Michael Myers legend for a few quick bucks, to disastrous effect. **Bryan Cairns** talks to director Rick Rosenthal.

## 32 ULTRAVIOLET

Creator Joe Ahearn embues his vampires with a cool, 21st century sheen and an agenda that's disturbingly ambivalent. **Paula Vitaris** looks into the mini-series that rewrote the rules on bloodsucker drama.

## 44 SPIDER-MAN'S NEW YORK

It took CG effects, stage sets, and, oh yes, some Manhattan-based location shoots to bring the masked web-slinger's home base to the screen. **Ross Plesset** surveys the effort.

## 46 SPY KIDS 2

They've got security clearance, snazzy gadgets, and a new mission. **Fred Topel** meets up with director Robert Rodriguez to discuss the continuing adventure.

## 50 GEORGE PAL REMEMBERED

**Bob Burns** shares memories of the legendary filmmaker with **Tom Weaver**.

## 58 DRAGONS IN FILM

PREVIEWS .....	4
NEWS .....	5
REVIEWS & LETTERS .....	62

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# CFQ Preview

Compiled by Dan Persons

## **SPIRITED AWAY** September 20 (Disney)

Three years after the fiasco that was *PRINCESS MONONOKE*'s U.S. release, Disney tries again with a Hayao Miyazaki feature that hews closer to what made the anime-master famous to begin with: A strong, young, female protagonist faces up to supernatural forces, in this case, demons who turn her parents into pigs. This was a major hit in Japan, but, then again, so was *MONONOKE*.

## **ABANDON** September 27 (Paramount)

Katie Holmes keeps having visions of a missing boyfriend, while police detective Benjamin Bratt discovers that she may have had more to do with her beau's disappearance than she thinks. Paramount's billing this as a "psychological thriller," but there are clear, supernatural elements as well.

## **BRING THE KIDS:**

Coming on October 4: *JONAH: A VEGGITALES MOVIE* (Out of FHE—this has a Christian theme to it, which you might want to take into account). Premiering on October 11: *POKEMON 4: THE MOVIE—CELEBI: A TIMELESS ENCOUNTER* (Miramax picked this one up, apparently before they realized they'd have to foot the bill to expand all those theater marquees).

## **BELOW** (Dimension)

Fall

Darren Aronofsky (scripter) meets David Twohy (director) in this story about a WWII sub that has to contend with something nastier than the Germans. We're there.

## **BULLETPROOF MONK** (MGM)

Fall

Chow Yun Fat, immortality, lotsa kung-fu, and a *rilly, rilly* cool title!

## **ADAM SANDLER'S 8 CRAZY NIGHTS** (Columbia)

November 27

If we admit that we sometimes laugh at Adam Sandler's TV work (we think it was while winning the People's Choice Award one year that he used his acceptance speech to spin a bizarre fantasy about lost love that itself was a masterpiece of passionate, off-beat comedy), can we also say that we completely fail to see the appeal of his movies? Sandler has toyed with animation before—who could forget his web-distributed *THE PEEPER* ("Sniffing my fingers...")? This is his first animated feature, about a guy sentenced to community service with a youth basketball team. Press material says the film is about "basketball, old girlfriends, holiday spirits, and the mall"—typical Sandler stuff, in other words. Aside from the appearance of an "eccentric, elf-like head referee," it's hard to tell how genre this will be, but, my, doesn't the image at left look like they've *really* taken advantage of the graphic freedom that animation provides?



## **TUCK EVERLASTING** Fall (Disney)

The fantasy of a girl whose neighbors may hold the secret of immortality was also filmed twenty-plus years ago by Frederick King Keller (who, interestingly, would eventually go on to direct quite a few *ANGEL* episodes). This new version is directed by Jay Russell, whose previous credit was the well-received *MY DOG SKIP*, so it's unlikely that we're looking at another, *BORROWERS*-calibre misfire here. Gentle fantasy tends to fare better with critics than with the boxoffice, but Disney has previously done well with off-beat, family-oriented offerings (remember *STRAIGHT STORY*?), so maybe this will get the attention it deserves.



## **ECKS VS SEVER** September 27 (Warners)

Another video game adaptation, this may dodge the bullet of such predecessors as *RESIDENT EVIL* and *LARA CROFT: TOMB RAIDER* by offering a more grounded story that revolves around the competition between two spies (Antonio Banderas and Lucy Liu).

## **RED DRAGON** May 24 (Universal)

Why remake a story that director Michael Mann previously delivered as the stylish *MANHUNTER*? Because both Dino De Laurentiis and Universal want to follow through on the gold mine that was *HANNIBAL*, and don't want to wait another decade for Thomas Harris to write the next installment. Powerhouse line-up: Anthony Hopkins returns as Lecter, Edward Norton is FBI agent Will Graham, *LAMB*'s screenwriter Ted Tally did the script. *THE FAMILY MAN*'s Brett Ratner directs.

## **THE RING** October 18 (Dreamworks)

The hit Japanese tale of a videotape that kills its viewers comes to the screen courtesy of *SCREAM 3*'s and *REINDEER GAME*'s scripter Ehren Kruger, and *MOUSE HUNT* and *THE MEXICAN*'s director Gore Verbinski. The original led to two sequels—will history repeat?

## **FEARDOTCOM** Fall (Warners)

It ain't *WWW.WATCHUSDIE.COM*, but they still get points for being ahead of the pack—you would've thought we'd have tons of "dot com" titles by now. This is about, duh, a deadly website.

## **GHOST SHIP** October 25 (Warners)

This is Dark Castle's (*13 GHOSTS*) first title not to be based on a William Castle production. Gabriel Byrne fights "strange things" on a derelict passenger ship.

## The Art of Film

### Comics Pro Preps for His Directing Debut

by Ross Plesset

Paul Power knows a bit about the drawn image. His arsenal of credits goes back to 1973 when, at the age of seventeen, he worked on *THE SUPER-FRIENDS*, animating Superman and Plastic Man. As a comic artist, he has drawn Spider-Man, Professor Om, and Air Hawk. His long list of storyboard credits includes *EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS*, *ROBOCOP*, *THE SIXTH DAY*, *THE FLINTSTONES*, *PREDATOR*, and *THE MUMMY*. Now, following in the footsteps of such artists-turned-directors as Ridley Scott (*ALIEN*, *BLADE RUNNER*), and Joe Johnston (*STAR WARS*, *HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS*), Power is working to helm his first feature film.

Power's debut effort will be an anthology called *THE THREE IMMIGRANTS*. Segment one, "I Just Draw," a semi-autobiographical depiction of life as a storyboard artist, is already in the can. Segment two, "The Gambler," will take the form of a romantic *TWILIGHT ZONE*-type story, while the final installment, "Old Hero," concerns a retired superhero and will actually be written and directed by comic book legend John Romita, Jr. (*X-Men*, *Spider-Man*, *Thor*).

In "I Just Draw," a storyboard artist, played by Harold Hopkins (*GALLIPOLI*), deals with issues in his career and personal life. It was shot in 2000 for \$15 grand, provided by Romita. "[It's] a little side of Hollywood that people don't normally see," said Power. "I've never seen anything about storyboard artists in Hollywood at all. I think they dealt with it in part of *DAY OF THE LOCUST* (1975)—the protagonist was a sketch artist, but they didn't make a big deal about it."

Power noted that personal experience is reflected in the film: "A lot of storyboard artists have paid twenty-five percent of their wages



Part of a feature-length trilogy created by comic and storyboard artist Paul Power, "I Just Draw" had its debut at Comic-Con, and is making the rounds of film festivals across the country.

to an agent, and in California it's only legal to give ten percent... To me, it's like prostitution; I make no secret about it. Luckily that seems to be changing."

With the film's sparse budget, Power was fortunate to get generous help from friends. Back in the early '70s, Harold Hopkins agreed to act for him, while a mutual friend introduced him to co-star Kelli Maroney (*NIGHT OF THE COMET*). Original music was provided by the Little River Band, Bad Finger, and the Apple Band. Unfortunately, the salaried members of the crew could be problematic. "I had a [camera] crew that I wasn't very happy with," he said. "They were the only people we paid—they stole stuff. Young filmmakers, if you get a dp, check 'em out. Some of my crew I really liked."

"I Just Draw" has already been seen at San Diego's Comic-Con, and various film festivals. Segment two of the anthology, "The Gambler," shoots later this year with John Bartley (*THE X-FILES*) as cinematographer.

NEW SHORT FILM by  
**JOHN ROMITA, JR.**  
and **PAUL POWER**

## "I JUST DRAW"

starring  
**DAVE THOMAS**

(of *SCTV* and  
*GRACE UNDER FIRE*)

**KELLI MARONEY,**  
**HAROLD HOPKINS,**  
**JOHN CYGAN** (of *BOB*),  
**STEPHEN ROWE,**  
**JAMES F. DEAN,**  
"JUDO" **GENE LE BELL**

**IS GENIAL JAWA A JEDI JOKER?**  
(Take that, *Variety*!)

Hal Wamsley is a source of controversy amongst *STAR WARS* fans. The actor/fan claims he played the chief Jawa in *STAR WARS* (a claim backed up in the Internet Movie Database), and for years has attended conventions such as StarCon along with the likes of Kenny Baker (*R2-D2*) and Phil Brown (Uncle Owen), sometimes autographing valuable merchandise. While Lucasfilm cannot categorically confirm or deny his participation in the *STAR WARS* shoot, fundamental elements of his story have now been disproved.

The 5'2" actor claims he played the part when he was fifteen, before he reached his full height. "My mom was an Avon Lady," he said, "and one of her clients was a casting director. She looked at me and said [to] my mom, 'You know, I could use somebody about your son's height.'" According to Wamsley, his scenes were filmed in Death Valley, California, over a pe-

riod of ten days as part of the *STAR WARS* pick-up shoot.

As many *STAR WARS* fans know, the movie credits Jack Purvis as the chief Jawa, not Wamsley. However, Wamsley claims some of Purvis's scenes had to be re-filmed, including the shooting of *R2-D2*. Furthermore, Wamsley says Purvis only appeared in *STAR WARS* during the droid sale at Uncle Owen's farm, a statement which has evoked skepticism from *STAR WARS* fans.

Besides the zapping of *R2-D2*, Wamsley mentioned other scenes he appeared in: "They did some close-ups of me putting the restraining bolt on *R2*, and then I [ushered] him up into the sandcrawler, where other Jawas are going up inside." The most

elaborate scene he described, which he discussed with this author in *Filmfax* #72, was set in a makeshift Jawa tent village with a sandcrawler in the background. This scene, he claims, was cut out of the film.

A recurring component of Wamsley's story is that the Tunisian sandcrawler set was rebuilt in Death Valley. "That is not true," said Lucasfilm's Stephen Sansweet. "I can tell you that the Jawa part of the shoot in Death Valley was a quick one. No sets were built—certainly no part of the sandcrawler was rebuilt. Furthermore, "there was no Jawa village scene shot in Death Valley." As to whether Wamsley was involved in the production at all, Sansweet is noncommittal: "When things quiet down here a bit, I'll try to dig up the old daily shooting records for you. We still have them, and that will be definitive proof one way or the other." In the meantime, should any fans see Wamsley at a convention selling autographs, caveat emptor.

Ross Plesset

# MUTANT X

## MEANIE

*As a Wiggled-Out Marvel Adversary, Tom McCamus Gets to Play Evil with an Agenda*

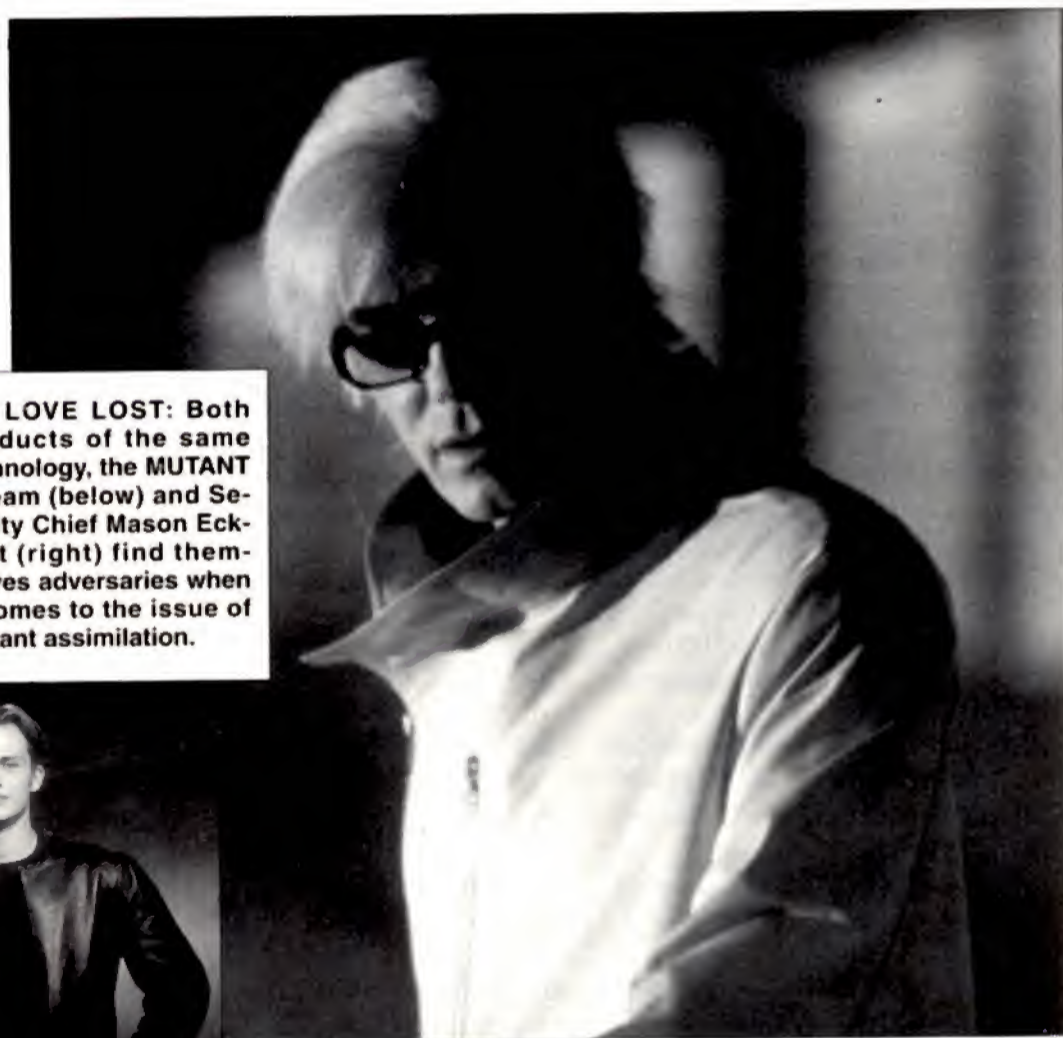
By Miwa Hirai

In the beginning, MUTANT X was just one of many. In the midst of several new and highly-anticipated SF shows, including ENTERPRISE, MUTANT X received only minor public attention, mostly relating to the legal issues between its producers and those of X-MEN over alleged similarities to the blockbuster movie. Yet fans quickly became hooked on MUTANT X, and the series became

the top-rated new drama in first-run syndication.

MUTANT X is based on a concept by Marvel Studios President/CEO Avi Arad (executive producer of MUTANT X) and Executive Consultant/Head Writer Howard Chaykin, who penned such comics as *Superman* and *Indiana Jones* and has also worked as

**NO LOVE LOST:** Both products of the same technology, the MUTANT X team (below) and Security Chief Mason Eckhart (right) find themselves adversaries when it comes to the issue of mutant assimilation.



writer/producer on a number of television series, including GENE RODDENBERRY'S EARTH: FINAL CONFLICT.

MUTANT X is set in contemporary America. The story opens with the revelation that a covert

branch of U.S. intelligence has for years been secretly sponsoring a human genetics program. The front for this government conspiracy is Genomex, a biotech firm that's actually a cover for the Genetic Security Agency. A former Genomex researcher known only as Adam (John Shea), helped devise genetically-en-

hanced mutants who were imprinted with extraordinary abilities. Since leaving Genomex, Adam has taken on the responsibility of saving his innocent creations by becoming the leader of Mutant X, a core group of "Children of Genomex," who protect their fellow mutants from harm and exploitation. The team members: Shalimar Fox, (Victoria Pratt), who is blessed with both human and animal DNA; tough, street-smart Brennan Mulwray (Victor Webster), a master of electricity who hurls bolts of energy from his fingertips; Jesse Kilmartin (Forbes March), a shape-shifter who can exert frightening control over his mutant form, and the youngest member, Emma de-Lauro (Lauren Lee Smith), a telepath who can read the feelings of others around her.

There is another force in Genomex. Security Chief Mason Eckhart (Tom McCamus), commands his forces to hunt down the new mutants and remove them from society. Eckhart intends to control the mutants and use them as research subjects. The new mutants—in particular, four young individuals who live in the mountain stronghold of Sanctuary, the headquarters of Mutant X—find themselves caught between opposing forces.

Winnipeg native Tom McCamus seems to really enjoy playing Adam's nemesis. "I have played some diverse characters throughout my acting career, but have never been involved in a full season of a television show. Actually, most of my work has been on stage, film, or as a guest on one episode. To be part of a family, watching them develop something over the year, has been great. I've played a lot of evil characters, but to play one over a long period of time, to find variety in the character and one who has a specific purpose in the grand scheme of things, has been a challenge."

McCamus won a 1993 Genie Award for Best Actor for his performance in David Wellington's feature film, *I LOVE A*

**BEAUTY IS ONLY SKIN DEEP:** Playing a mutant with plastic skin and an ongoing case of a bad hair day, actor Tom McCamus hopes to enter the pantheon of memorable Marvel villains.



**MAN IN UNIFORM.** He has also appeared in such films as

*THE SWEET HEREAFTER* and *THE HEIST*, along with such TV shows as *DUE SOUTH* and *TEKWAR*. "I was asked if I would be interested in playing the part," he recalled. "I thought about it for a long time and then said, 'Yes.' I think, as an actor, to have fun doing what you do is important, so I took the opportunity. Playing an evil man is fun to me."

Well, playing the man under Andy Warhol's wig would be fun for anyone. "The wig is a collaboration idea—FX artists, directors, actor and producers. When we were in the special effects studio experimenting with plastic skin and silicon, we tried on a number of wigs. The white one had the right, creepy feel to it. The one I wear now was made later on, when it was decided that the wig

shouldn't be so wild."

"The first day on the set was about getting to know who everyone was and what they did, as well as trying to find the basis for who my character would become. The wig was very comfortable and gave me a good jumping-in [point], establishing Eckhart. Similar to wearing a mask.

"I try not to analyze Eckhart. I receive each new script a week before shooting and discern his development from that. From the outside, he is an evil man, so I try to inject as much cold heartlessness into him as I can. On the inside, he is a human being, so I try to soften him with a bit of humor."

Eckhart blames Adam for the failed experiment that requires him to be forever insulated in an impermeable, artificial skin. His hatred for new mutants grows greater for every day that Mutant X exists. He won't give up until all "anom-

alies" are under his control. "Adam is his rival," noted McCamus. "But much as Eckhart hates him, he does have a healthy respect for his intelligence and abilities."

*MUTANT X* went into production with a 44-episode guarantee. At the time of this writing, they had just finished shooting the first season's cliffhanger finale. What does McCamus feel are the high points of his on-set experience, so far? "I'm very bad at relaying anecdotes," he replied. "If I do find something, I usually can't put it into words. Either that, or it will be about the particular brand of salsa that craft brought on the set. Sorry, I can't say that I have any one favorite episode through the season. However, there is a scene concerning death by spaghetti that I quite enjoyed doing. And in season two, I'm looking forward to 'waking up.' You'll see what I mean."

# Tom Savini

*He's Been a Writer, a Director, and a  
Legendary Makeup FX Artist  
But What He Really Wants to Do is Act*

By Mike Watt

For most movie fans, actor/director and special effects master Tom Savini needs no introduction. His face is easily recognizable as "Sex Machine" in *FROM DUSK 'TIL DAWN*, Morgan in George Romero's *KNIGHTRIDERS*, or, more recently, the mysterious Peter Reynolds in *SHEENA QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE* with Gena Lee Nolan. Meanwhile, his handiwork more than speaks for

itself. He is the master behind the gory effects from the original *FRIDAY THE 13TH*; the monsters in *CREEPSHOW*; and the zombies in *DAWN OF THE DEAD* and its gruesome sequel, *DAY OF THE DEAD*. He is the Guru of Gore, the Baron of Blood.

That's not the whole story. Throughout his career, the combat photographer-turned-actor/effects artist has also played the role of stunt-man, consultant, ballistics expert, director—both theatrical (*NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* 1990) and television (numerous episodes of *TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE*)—and voice-over artist (*THE SIMPSONS*).

"When you're in 'The Simpsons,' you've either made it or it's over," Savini said with a laugh. "I got an email a few days ago from the casting director of the new Muppet movie. They want me to play a part in that. It's the same casting director and production manager from *SHEENA*. *MUPPETS MEET THE SWAMP CREATURE* or something. I can't wait to talk to them!"

More towards his usual calling, Savini oversaw the effects for a biopic about Ted Bundy, and will be playing, Angelo Bono, one of the Hillside Stranglers, for the same company, Tartan Films. "Matthew Bright, the director, called me to play the detective that interrogates Bundy. I also consulted on the effects—I hired KNB to do it. I guess it's going to be on HBO or go straight to video. I don't know what's going to happen to it. These guys seem to be doing the whole series. Ed Gein, Ted Bundy—the next one was going to be Jeffrey Dahmer, but they decided to go with the Hillside Stranglers. I'll be one of them. I don't know how many they're doing. Maybe they'll come out

with a whole boxed set."

Since Savini is an expert on cinematic murder, it seemed only fair to ask him why there is such a fascination with serial killers, particularly in the last ten years. "Don't ask me why. I hate reading about them. I don't even want to watch the stuff I'm in—the Ted Bundy thing is pretty brutal. I don't buy the books; I don't want that stuff in my brain. I don't want those memories."

It's well-known that Savini didn't get into the special effects business for the blood and gore effects. "My attitude is and always was that the more you do, the more you get to do. I always felt that doing the special makeup effects would open doors for me that just being an actor would not. It kind of worked. George hired me as just an actor for *KNIGHTRIDERS*, although I did supervise Ed Harris' stitches and the blood. My goal is [to] just act. I still do special effects when it's called for, but you have a team of people and a truckload of equipment. As an actor, you show up naked, they clothe you, they feed you, they treat you like royalty. Acting is the hardest thing to do, but it spoils you. I'd rather just act from movie to movie."

As a combat photographer in Viet Nam, Savini had seen his share of horrific sights. But as a young man growing up in Pittsburgh, his imagination was captured by the Universal Monsters: *Frankenstein*; *Dracula*; *the Mummy*. "I loved the monsters. I wanted to create the monsters, after I found out they were created—when I was twelve, they were real. It was only after seeing [James Cagney in the Lon Chaney biography] *MAN OF A THOUSAND FACES* that I said, 'Oh yeah, someone creates this stuff. Well I want to be the one to create them.'

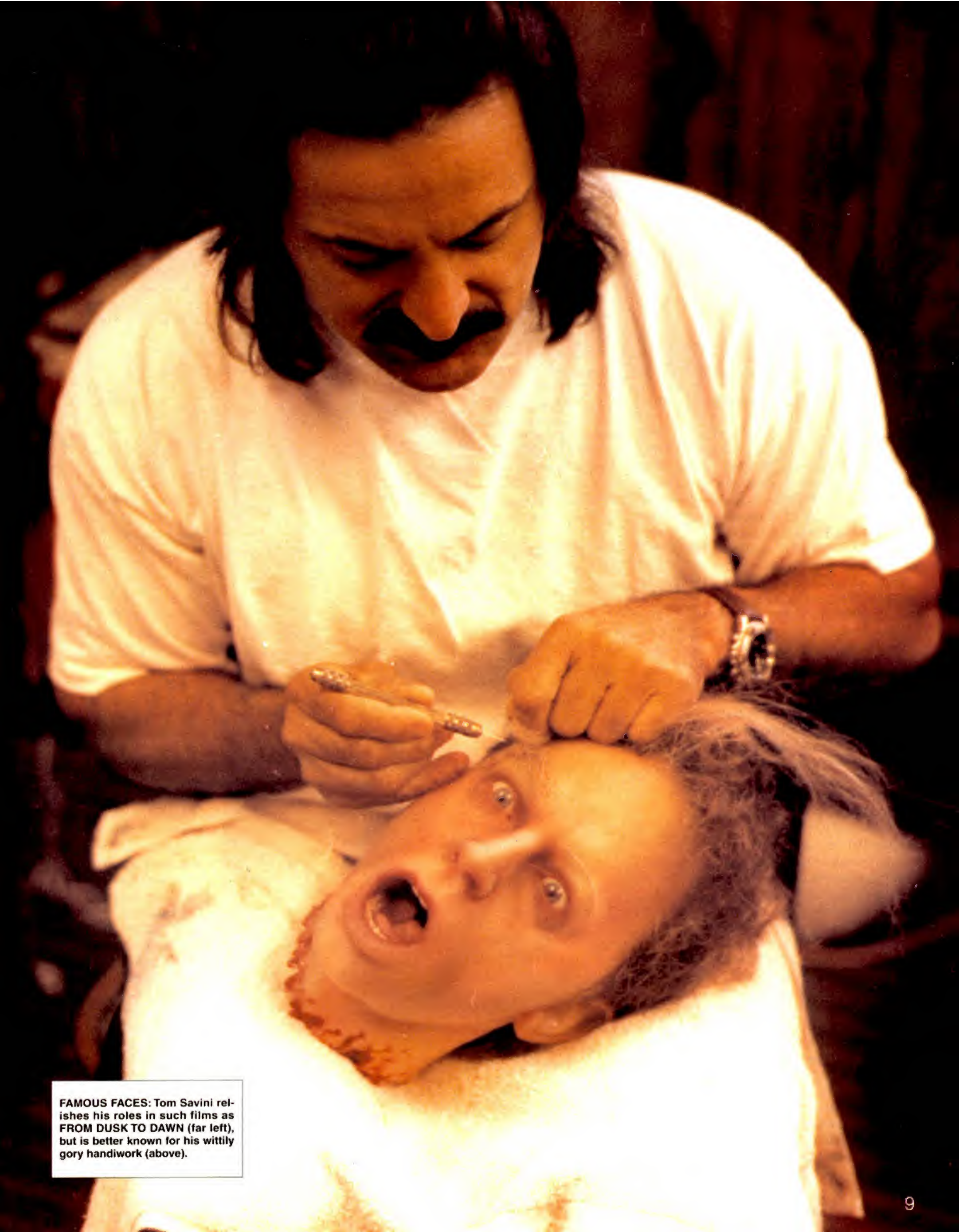
"[My work on] George Romero's *MARTIN* was actually the first time that I



DAVID  
EITEL  
DORIS  
LOONEY  
MARTIN  
PARANTINO  
ALEXIS  
LEWIS  
ALMA  
MAYEK

FROM  
DUSK  
'TIL  
DAWN  
8





**FAMOUS FACES:** Tom Savini relishes his roles in such films as **FROM DUSK TO DAWN** (far left), but is better known for his wittily gory handiwork (above).

thought of makeup as special effects. I had assisted Alan Ormsby on *DERANGED* and *DEATHDREAM*—those were makeups, but they were creature makeups. Those were monsters to me.”

After working on such “slasher” movies as *FRIDAY THE 13TH*, *THE BURNING*, and *THE PROWLER*, Savini’s reputation as “the wizard of gore” became firmly established. He was now the go-to-guy for bloody effects, resulting in his presence on such non-horror projects as the Robert Mitchum war film *MARIA’S LOVERS*, Chuck Norris’ *INVASION U.S.A.*, and *RED SCORPION*. “There are a ton of non-horror movies with gore effects, non-horror movies that need to satisfy the gore-monsters in fandom.”

As audience appreciation of bloody movies grew, so did their knowledge of the behind-the-scenes work that went into the severed arms and heads. Savini, like fellow make-up artists Rick Baker (*AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*, *MEN IN BLACK*) and Rob Bottin (*THE HOWLING*, *JOHN CARPENTER’S THE THING*), became a cult celebrity and a hero to budding young effects artists and aspiring filmmakers. One recent result of his fame is the Tom Savini Special Make-Up Effects Program, a 16-month course provided by the Douglas Education Center in Monessen, Pennsylvania, a school that fills a need that was not being met at the successful Art Institute of Pittsburgh.

Meanwhile, another project Savini was to write and direct, *VAMPIRATES*, has been lingering in a frustrating limbo for almost four years. “I’ve never done as much work on a movie as I did on *VAMPIRATES*. I completely created that movie on paper. I did a shot list, I even did a segue list, which is how you visually move from scene to scene, with dissolves—every visual transition in that film is on paper, ready to go. I had a beard a foot long [to play the lead villain, Blackbeard] and was getting into physical shape. All the locations in Saint Thomas were blocked out. This movie is ready to go!”

“One of the producers died, and now the other one is saying things like, ‘How about we get rid of the pirates?’ So that’s why it is in limbo. I wish I owned the project. I’d be in California right

now raising the dough to shoot it.

“One of the producers and I went to California, and in one day we raised two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, with Plaza Entertainment and Showcase Entertainment. They told us, ‘This is unheard of. Nobody comes in here, raises that much money in two days and goes away.’ Everywhere we went, people would say ‘Ahh, Tom Savini, you’re a legend!’ and that’s how we got the money. That pisses me off because it made me realize I could have been out there years ago, pitching *CLAUSTROPHOBIA* or *THE TOUCH* or any number of projects that came my way. If I owned *VAMPIRATES*, I would be out there shooting the damned thing. It would only take a million and a half to shoot. It would have to be shot in the summer—I’d say it would have to be shot in St. Thomas, because that’s where the pirate ship and all the locations are. In the summer, nothing’s going on down there.”

So why doesn’t Savini buy the project and do it himself? “I want to. I don’t have the

money. The writer was so desperate for money, he finally sold the project to the remaining producer for ten thousand dollars. That project, that wonderful project! If I can call him and say, ‘Give me the option...’

“This is what I do all the time. If I get a good script in the mail, from a fan, from anybody, I’ll say, ‘Look, give me the option for about three or four months. If I get it going, you get fifty grand and a percentage off the back end.’ But I’m not going to shop your project around if I don’t own it. Why should I do them this big favor? I could do that same thing with *VAMPIRATES*. Eventually, I will. It’s ready to go.”

Savini hasn’t been sitting around idly waiting for the film fairy to arrive. In the past year, he has worked on a number of independent horror movies as actor and special effects consultant. Some of the titles boasting Savini’s name include *VICIOUS*, the H.P. Lovecraft

adaptation *BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP*, and Rick Danford’s *WEB OF DARKNESS* (also starring Savini’s *DEMON LUST* co-star, Brinke Stevens).

According to Danford, Savini was lured to the project after almost a full year of e-mail nagging,

followed by the unsolicited shipping of the script. (Note to budding filmmakers: Danford and Savini are old acquaintances. This is *not* the way to approach someone to star in your movie.) What did Savini think of the *WEB OF DARKNESS* screenplay? “I thought the script was way too wordy. Page after page after page of dialogue. I told Rick this. He knows it. I told him ‘Shoot the stuff that you’re having them talk about.’ People go to a movie to see things happen, not listen to people talk.

“What drew me down there was that it was [being shot] in Tampa. Any excuse to go to Orlando. It was great fun. [Danford is] sending me a script for a project they want me to direct, called *DEATH ISLAND* [which will also feature Stevens as well as b-



**SIMPLY SCARY:** Savini favors using live actors wherever possible to make his effects more convincing. Upper right: The Savini shop.

movie favorite Debbie Rochon]. They're sending me pre-production money, they want me to do a script breakdown."

In the movie, Stevens plays an undead beauty named Intensity, while Savini pulls double-duty as a villainous vampire called Rogue and special-effects consultant. "There's a great guy, Chris Polidoro, who was really gung-ho and did the effects. [In one scene] the guy puts holy water all over himself, so that when she [Stevens] goes to bite him, she burns her



**CREEPY CONTINUITY:** Savini made his name working on such classic fright-fests as *DAY OF THE DEAD* (left). Now, he has leveraged his rep to form his own school and win stints as full-fledged director and featured player.



mouth. They wanted a shot of the smoke coming from her mouth, but Brinke couldn't inhale enough smoke to [make the effect look real]. They were in a time crunch—they had just gotten kicked out of one motel as soon as they had gotten set up, and they had to quickly find another motel for the location. Some pain in the ass thing—the motel was for prostitutes anyway. So, anyway, I grabbed Chris: 'Do you have any tubing? Give me the tubing! Do you have some glue? Give me the glue!' We glued tubing to Brinke and I blew cigar smoke out of the tubing. Later on, I mentioned a technique that I'd heard [was used in] Frank Langel-la's *DRACULA*. They cast the point of a stake in hollow latex, deflated it onto a sealed plate, [applied the plate to the actor's chest,] threw air into it, and, 'Pow!' the stake would pop out. In an hour, [Polidoro] created it with wet latex and a blow dryer. Gung-ho guy, really good."

As for director Danford, Savini was blunt as a hammer: "He sucked at the beginning. But I was impressed by how much he learned. By the end of the shoot, he was a director. He was thinking, coming in and asking for things and not accepting any bullshit. He made sure things happened his way. If the scene wasn't dynamic enough—he was doing certain coverage angles to

me for this H.P. Lovecraft movie he was doing the effects for in Tennessee: *BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP*. And he's directing another movie that I really want to do for him, called *OPEN SEASON*. I'd play this leather-wearing, motorcycle-riding villain."

As much as Savini enjoys to act, he admits that there are other factors that sway his decisions to appear in certain movies. "I do these movies sometimes because of where they are and the money involved. Look at [the infamous Christopher Lewis-directed] *THE RIPPER*. It's *still* on the stands in video stores. People still come up to me and ask me to sign those damned tapes, and I always say, 'Throw this thing away!' I'm in there for thirty seconds, but they paid me [a ton of money] for one day. Sometimes, when you're broke, you do these things."

Savini has been burned in the past by producers on all levels of the game. As a regrettable result, he accepts no offer on faith. "I don't even put it in my calendar before they pay me half the money up front. Really. I can't, because of the way I was burned on *STRANGELAND*. I worked for three years on and off on that thing, when it was still called *HELLTOWN*. I said 'Dee [Snider—the credited

writer], this is shit!' He's admitted that I said this.

"I worked with him on this script, and when he got the money, he didn't back me up with the producers. He didn't say, 'No, I want Tom to direct it.' They hired some kid out of film school. I had some incredibly gorgeous visual transitions going on; it would have been a great movie. On the DVD he credits me for all the work I did, never mentions the kid that was hired—they had a big falling out. And the movie...I still haven't seen it. I don't want to see my ideas up there. [But] we're still friends."

Savini is spending as much time as ever behind the camera as in front of it. "My goal is to be a working actor and go from one thing to another. So far, it's been kind of happening. But they always want me to consult with the f/x guys and use my name somewhere in the credits as consultant, and that's fine. I'm not getting bored at all. In fact, it's better for me. It's great to supervise someone else doing all that. It's the coming up with the actual ideas that is my forte. Any good artist can build the stuff realistically. The first thing I tell my students at the school—my whole outlook—has always been: What do I need to see to make me believe that what I'm seeing is real? And then build the pieces. You've just created the magic trick.

"As a supervisor, that's what I try to relay to new f/x crews. You don't need to build the whole body. You can use a real person's body and make the illusion work. Use the face, the hands. I don't care how good it is, after three seconds, you can tell it's a fake head. Schwarzenegger's head in *THE TERMINATOR*. Kevin Yagher's heads in *SLEEPY HOLLOW* were wonderful, but longer than three seconds and..." He snapped his fingers. "That's why I like to use the real actor and adjust the blade or the weapon or whatever. Use the real actor as much as possible, the shot isn't fake! You can never get better than the real thing, unless you're Dick Smith." CFQ

# EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS

## *The Spiders are on the March How to Put A-Level FX in a B-Movie*

By Chuck Wagner

Warner Bros.' EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS wants to be the vanguard of a new trend: an old-fashioned B-movie that happens to boast great effects. Having worked as a visual effects supervisor on SPIDER-MAN and now EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS, Karen Goulekas knows too well the magnitude

of the task. "I would definitely say we weren't using an 'A' budget!" she laughed. "It was a tight budget for the amount of work that we did. I think the work came out really nicely.

"It's kind of funny. This is almost the same story as GODZILLA, where I came in in the middle. On EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS, I missed principal photography. There was a previous visual effects su-

pervisor on the show by the name of Tom Dadres—he was there for the shoot. I guess it just didn't work out, but we'll be sharing main title credit. He left, and I came in and inherited whatever was there. So I was really only on it for the post-production portion."

Of course, this meant Goulekas was stuck with anything left

undone by the time principal photography wrapped, and CG effects are mainly done in post. "Exactly!" she said. "It was lacking a little bit in survey data, tracking data, and camera reports, but we were able to work around it. I got there at the fun part, when it was time to direct the animation and create the

spiders: the character of them, and the goop that spurts out of them when they shoot.

**OFF THE SHELF FRIGHTS:** Working under a restricted budget, the EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS effects crew had to conjure up an army of deadly arachnids.

None of that stuff had been done yet. It was great."

Goulekas' crew used mostly key-frame animation to create the rampaging arachnids. "There were cycles the artists could pull from," she said. "But you never really use the straight cycle. We studied the live spiders, but then they made an animation cycle in the computer—different walks and runs for the spiders. An artist might load a cycle in, but then we'd have to change it. In character, the spiders would have to pause, rear up, slow down—the cycle was very much just a starting place. The way we had these guys attacking...and some of the spiders laugh—they shake up and down; they're fighting with each other. They're not really doing a lot of spider stuff. They walk the way real spiders would



walk.

"The spiders themselves took a lot of work. It's four times the amount of animation than for a human—instead of two legs, we have to think about eight. And there was the organization of large numbers of spiders. We couldn't just use 'flocking software.'"

Flocking software allows easier creation of movement in large groups, based upon general rules for herd movement. "This wasn't a herd of cattle," Goulekas said. "The spiders all had different things going on. Even if they were all running,



**CREEPING INFLATION:** Our good friend, toxic waste, once again provides the mechanism by which common spiders are "embiggened" and go on a rampage in **EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS**.

nates the water, and it's like steroids for the spiders. They're growing and growing and growing through the whole movie.

They're killing off people—it's a funny movie!"

For Goulekas, it was all in a day's work. "I wouldn't call this one of the more difficult films I've worked on. The goop the spiders shoot was probably the most difficult stuff to develop, because it was liquidy. Basically, the practical goop that comes out of the spider was applesauce dyed green. Anything you see coming out of the spiders, we did in CG. There was talk early on about trying to do it practically, but what are you going to do? Explode a bag of applesauce on set at exactly the right time and right place?"

What was most challenging? "There were these shots—we called them the cat shots. There's this part in the movie where a spider goes into a vent. The family cat follows after him. Originally, you just heard the screeching of the cat fighting and all these sound effects and people are looking at the walls and the ceiling. Well, [producer] Dean [Devlin] and [director] Ellory [Elkayen] decided, 'Let's add in some really comical effects.' Basically, we would have a cat face come smashing through the plaster of the wall, and then a spider body, and then part of a cat. It was just really funny. It cracks the plaster and you see the imprints. It's cartoonish, in a way. Sick, but funny." CFQ



some would rear up, or they'd attack each other. There's all kinds of little, sub-level things going on. We've got scenes where there are just hundreds of spiders packed in. So cycles would be used for maybe the far, far away spiders."

In **THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS**—a project that didn't employ Goulekas—real lions were filmed against blue screen and then composited into scenes. "There's no way we could do that with spiders," said Goulekas. "The spiders would have to be magnified, and there'd be no way to line it up. Plus, the spiders' motions were really driven by the motion of the people. As the person started to run, then mimicked falling down and getting mauled, we had to animate to his performance, rather than him trying to move to the spi-

der's performance."

On-set stand-ins weren't used for the spiders. "The actors all mimed it," Goulekas explained. "They knew at a certain point to fall over. Some of the guys had wires on them, and they'd yank them backward. Or they'd be shooting guns in the air at the spiders, and we'd put a spider there and explode it."

"Sometimes it gets really tricky with eye-lines and stuff, but when it's with spiders, it's not like it's a CG character having a conversation with a live actor, where the eye-line isn't going to be forgiving at all. When it's fast action with a giant spider coming at somebody, there's a lot more leeway."

Given the budgetary constraints, off-the-shelf software was the order of the day. "There really wasn't anything proprietary about it," Goulekas said.

case of a spider specifically attacking a human, we would key-frame animate all the way. For the most part, the whole thing was key frame. I had a little program that was my tally: how many spiders in a shot. The last number I had up was 2,206 spiders. All told, there were about 200 CG effects shots—shots with spider animation were 191."

That's a lot of spiders. "There were some real tarantulas that were kind of pets there at CFX [Centropolis Effects]. Some of the people liked them, and would let them walk on them. I wouldn't touch them. I don't like the big tarantulas."

In the film's plot, as you might imagine, the cause of all the trouble was that B-movie staple: industrial greed. "It's a toxic waste accident," Goulekas laughed. "Something contami-

By Dan Scapperotti

Francis and Tim are a couple of Catholic high school kids whose simple world consists of heroes—themselves—and villains—personified by Sister Assumpta, the authority figure they see as standing in their way of having fun. Combining their talents, the boys, played by Emile Hirsch and Kieran Culkin, come up with a comic book version of the world as they see it, with the nun becoming a motorcycle riding demon and they, of course, assuming the role of superheroes. Directed by Peter Care, *THE DANGEROUS LIVES OF ALTER BOYS* is a coming-of-age story based on the popular novel by Chris

grown-up voice, would incorporate the kids' love of comic books and would cut into this fantasy world, which was the animation. They wanted to know whether I'd be interested in doing that. It kind of seemed like an intriguing concept. Mixed in with the fact that Jodie Foster was going to be involved with it, I decided to spend some time on it." That time became a ten-month commitment.

The parameters facing McFarlane were a limited budget and a short, for animation, turn-around schedule. "It wasn't going to be done in a big place like Disney or Pixar, where it would be done in-house—we didn't have that luxury," said McFarlane. "When you have dilemmas placed upon you, then you

McFarlane said. "You need a director, but behind the director, behind the cameras, there are key grips and people who light it and cinematographers and sound. Animation is the same way: It takes a lot of people to get the final product done. I designed part of it and drew some of it, but no one person can do all the work to get the animation done.

"Animation is sort of a freelance business—you come and go. I bumped into a couple of people I've done business with, otherwise it was just *Who's available?* and *Can we get it done?* and *Does everyone have the schedule under their belt?*"

The imaginations of Francis and Tim didn't lend themselves to a polished, Disneyesque ani-

I am and if you want to go chase the girls and rescue the damsel in distress, so be it—you do what you have to do and I'm going to do what I'm going to do. There are a lot of metaphors and symbolism of these guys lives, beyond just that they thought the teachers were bad or Catholicism would hold them back a little bit."

Before production rolled, McFarlane met frequently with Foster and Care, planning the direction and look of the animated scenes. The two units, animation and live action, shot simultaneously. "We all got to throw our two cents in," said McFarlane. "Then we sort of went away, got some of the animation done, and when some of the animation came back we

# The **DANGEROUS** Lives of **ALTAR BOYS**

## *Coming of Age... Todd McFarlane Style*

Fuhrman. Producer Jodie Foster plays the lame Sister Assumpta, whose main concern is for the welfare of her students, although the teenagers fail to get the point.

Throughout the film, the boys' imaginations run wild, and are visualized in sequences animated by multimedia guru Todd McFarlane, the man who created the ground breaking comic book character Spawn. Jay Shapiro, another of *ALTAR BOYS'* producers had seen *SPAWN*, and offered the job of directing the animated sequences to McFarlane. "He told me of this project, which wasn't going to be a big budget film," said McFarlane. "It was this live-action movie that, instead of having this voice-over showing the angst of the kids or the coming of age cliché of the

do what most people do: You do the research and development here locally. You develop the characters, do the storyboards, do the backgrounds, but the actual physical labor of it gets done in different places around the world.

"In this case, we got it done in Korea. We had time sort of condensed on this. We didn't have an army of people working on it, but otherwise doing the design, the backgrounds, the storyboards, the editing and getting it done, all that was consistent from *SPAWN* to *ALTAR BOYS*."

McFarlane rounded up some *SPAWN* alumni, including Terry Fitzgerald, Eric Radomski, and Mike Wolf, who produced *TOM AND JERRY: THE MOVIE*. "Animation is no different than making a movie,"

got back together. When we had to start to edit and actually put it into the film as a whole, that's when they got heavily involved again. They were involved at the beginning and at the end, and obviously we had to get approval all the way through.

"We had a fair amount of interaction with Jodie Foster, especially towards the end when we were trying to marry the 2-D to the live-action. My interaction with her was different from what most people would think. They see her as an actress. If you're a director, then you direct her as an actress. But she has directed herself, and she's got a lot of good ideas. Although she starred in this, she was also one of the producers, so she came at it from that angle. My conversations with her

mation technique. Instead, McFarlane used a rough, stylized visual style. "It's sort of fantastic; the animation is a little raw visually, because it's supposed to be the mind of a fourteen year-old. Another topic of conversation was whether we should make it slick. I'm forty-one, and I can do a lot of slick stuff, and with technology, we can do even a lot more slick stuff. But this was the early '70s, and a fourteen year old boy, where do you put his style? It's just a voice-over that's there, and if you follow the sequence of the story, it's not just who's the bad guy, but who your friends are.

"There's even the division of the transformation of the two lead boys. One goes from the muscle to the skeleton, which means I'm just going to be who

were for production reasons: How do we solve this problem, or is this looking good, or is this a headache we'll be going over budget on? They were more pragmatic.

"Everybody had ideas, and animation doesn't allow for a lot of subtlety and nuances unless you have \$40 million and four years to

artists who helped to bridge the gaps. "I think they did a nice job using foley and sound to butt up the abrupt cuts from the live-action to the 2-D," he said. "We knew that we weren't going to do any of these fade-in and fade-out, pretty transitions; the boy is standing there, sort of melancholy, then all of a sudden, *da da*

**SACRED AND PROFANE:** Putting the yearnings and fears of adolescent boys into animated form, Todd McFarlane came up with evocative designs for classroom crushes (left) and overbearing authority (right).



Sorcerella #4

work on it. We didn't have that luxury. It was trying to get everyone to understand that there are rules for animation and rules for live action, and somehow we have to figure out how to make both of those work within the confines of a final product. It wasn't a complete love-fest."

Since the animated sequences would be quick cuts back and forth from the live-action sequences, McFarlane gave high marks to the foley

*da da*. That can be a little disruptive, especially given that you're changing actually 3-D and 2-D worlds right in front of people. There are moments where I think they did a nice job starting the music or even [having] voice-overs tripping into live action, giving you one, two, three seconds of a lead, and then, *boom*. It doesn't seem that the cut is that harsh, because they lead you into this new world." **CFQ**



Bat Nun #1

# REIGN OF



*The Myth is Real*



FINAL

*and Out to Get You*

By Andrew Osmond

**H**ere be dragons, a phrase to send shivers up the spine. On ancient maps, the words conjure visions of distant, magic realms, *terras incognita* where cartographers admit defeat and scurry home. In these far-off places of the imagination, one might see a great winged shape in the sky, a flash of fire, an echoing roar. And one would live in awe and wonder of beasts older than time itself, creatures greater and more powerful than the strength of dreams.

But not here, in the real world of taxes and technology and TV. Until now. **REIGN OF FIRE**, the new summer actioner from Spyglass Entertainment, brings dragons out of myths and fairy-tales and pits them against the know-how of modern man. Goodbye civilization.

The story begins with a lengthy prologue set in present-day London. The city's subway system is being extended when the diggers hit an underground cavern (plainly, they haven't seen 1967's **QUATERMASS AND THE PIT**—which also involved nasty discoveries near London subways—or they might have been wariest about poking around). Inquisitive schoolboy Quinn, the child of one of the investigators, ventures into the hole and makes, as director Rob Bowman put it mildly, "a very unexpected discovery."

Cut forward to 2032 and... the world is different. There are fewer people for a start, and the survivors huddle indoors and watch the skies with the same terror that **JAWS** audiences had for beaches or the characters in **TREMORS** had for Nevada deserts. This is the age of dragons:

lethal, pitiless killing machines that infest the planet like a swarm of outsized locusts.

The story centers on one of the few remaining human communities, scrabbling for survival in burned-out Blighty. In a neat acknowledgement of the medieval fantasy settings of many dragon tales, the eighty-odd souls use a castle for their base, and society has reverted to old-style feudalism. The castle lord is Quinn (Christian Bale), the onetime schoolboy who saw the dragons' emergence firsthand. A grim, harsh man, Quinn is committed to his people's safety. Fighting the dragons, he believes, is a fool's game. The most one can do is stay out of their way, and stay alive. From Quinn's perspective, the dragons' predicament is as great as the humans'. The mon-

sters have eaten the planet so bare, they're starving. The humans just have to wait them out.

Of course, no Hollywood film can allow that thinking to prevail. Enter the splendidly-named Denton Van

Zan, the Yank leader of a mercenary team who demonstrates that, come Armageddon, Brits and Americans won't see eye-to-eye. Van Zan is a dragon-killer who believes he's found the key to victory. The dragons, he's discovered, have their own king, a great brute who fertilizes every dragon egg. The humans, not very affectionately, call

**ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT:** Innocent curiosity sows the seeds of humanity's downfall at the beginning of **REIGN OF FIRE** (left). Below: Director Rob Bowman built his own castle in the Irish countryside.



him "Ashley." Take out Ashley—whose lair is in ruined London—and the war's won. At least that's Van Zan's view. Quinn is less than taken with the upstart—"Don't you have enough dragons to kill in America?"—and refuses, point-blank, to help.

"REIGN is the story of humans struggling to survive," said director Rob Bowman. His name may be unfamiliar to cinemagoers, but he's an sf and fantasy veteran, having served on several generations of genre TV shows. His early gigs included work on QUANTUM LEAP, STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, and the excellent TV ver-



**ATLANTIC OVERTURES:** Two Americans (Matthew McConaughey and Izabella Scorupco, at left) try to convince a British leader (Christian Bale, right) that there are ways to exterminate the dragons that plague the Earth. Left: REIGN envisions our world regressing into a desperate feudalism.



terminated to destroy each other," said Birnbaum. "The themes aren't deep or hidden—it's a straight action-adventure." Added Barber, "The scenario is that no one knows how many humans are left, how many pockets of survivors. Quinn's people are isolated at the beginning of the film. Then suddenly, Van Zan's

have the same goal: to make the dragons go away. Quinn thinks we should outlast them, wait for them to starve. Van Zan thinks humans should bring about the dragons' extinction themselves, even if that means sacrificing lives. Quinn's response is that there are few enough humans left already, and he's not going to let any more be dragon-food. If Van Zan wants to try with his own merc team, that's great, but Quinn won't help."

Bowman likened REIGN's approach to JAWS, a film defined by the lead trio of Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw, and Richard Dreyfuss, rather than by Bruce the shark. "I liked the way the people in JAWS created a sense of reality. Even though the shark was cheesy, people could forgive it because of the dimensionality of the characters. The first ALIEN film was like that too. These films found a way to ground absurd ideas."

Following these two predecessors, Bowman wanted to convey a sense of humans in perpetual fear. "It's like being a swimmer in

sion of ALIEN NATION. He became best-known, though, for THE X-FILES, for which he directed over thirty episodes, ranging from epic arc stories like "Endgame" to deconstructive fan-favorites like "Jose Chung's *From Outer Space*." More importantly, Bowman directed the theatrical X-FILES film, which may have confused newbies but boasted some splendidly cinematic set-pieces, especially the frozen flying saucer finale.

Bowman likes to describe REIGN OF FIRE as presenting "the last few desperate moments" of an epic struggle. "We wanted to portray a set of extreme circumstances where humans struggle to survive each day by the grace of God. There are not many humans left, and not many dragons left. The question is whether the ending will be a man and woman walking into the sunset, or a dragon flying over it!" At bottom, said Bowman, REIGN is about people, not dragons. "When the situation is so extreme, it really tests people's mettle. You find out who someone truly is."

Producers Roger Birnbaum and Gary Barber agree. "It's a battle for survival between two sides de-

team turns up, but there's no guarantee they're friendly. Both teams want to survive, are determined to survive, but have very different ways of going about it."

How did the filmmakers construct the human story? "We boiled the idea down to something you could hang your hat on," said Bowman, coining an admirably mixed metaphor. "The basic idea was to find a conflict between two lead characters who



**RISKY BUSINESS:** The American team comes to Great Britain boasting an effective, but dangerous, technique for exterminating dragons.

“Living with dragons is like being a swimmer in the Great Barrier Reef. You might go for a month without seeing a predator, but the danger is always there.”

—Director Rob Bowman

the sea around the Great Barrier Reef. You might go for a month and never see a shark or a predator, but the danger is there every second. In REIGN, every time humans go outside, they're in danger from dragons.”

The REIGN characters are hardened by circumstance. “Everyone has suffered, everyone has lost people. No one worries about small things, or talks much about their own experiences. It's like there's no need for New Yorkers to talk about September 11th, because everyone knows what happened, everyone feels the same way.”

Quinn is especially reticent about his past. “All he's about is keeping people alive,” noted Bowman. “He's like a feudal lord, strict and authoritarian. His people's situation is all that concerns him. It's a hard lifestyle: The food is bad, the work is hard, there can be acrimony. He sustains his people through fears and frustrations, so they'll keep living a day at a time. He never talks about his personal traumas, about how he was the first person to see a dragon.”

Quinn is played by Christian Bale, who came to fame in Spielberg's World War II drama EMPIRE OF THE SUN, playing the eleven-year old boy stranded when the Japanese invade Shanghai. He had another junior role in the more obscure LAND OF FARAWAY, a European fantasy adventure starring Christopher Lee. More recently, Bale was the reporter in the glam-rock homage VELVET GOLDMINE and courted controversy as the anti-hero of AMERICAN PSYCHO.

Quinn's rival Van Zan is played by Matthew McConaughey, whose varied career takes in everything from John Grisham legal thrillers (A TIME TO KILL) to Gen-X

comedies (Richard Linklater's SLACKERS) and alien encounters (CONTACT, where he played the charismatic believer to Jodie Foster's staunch atheist). More recently, he was the reality television star of EDTV.

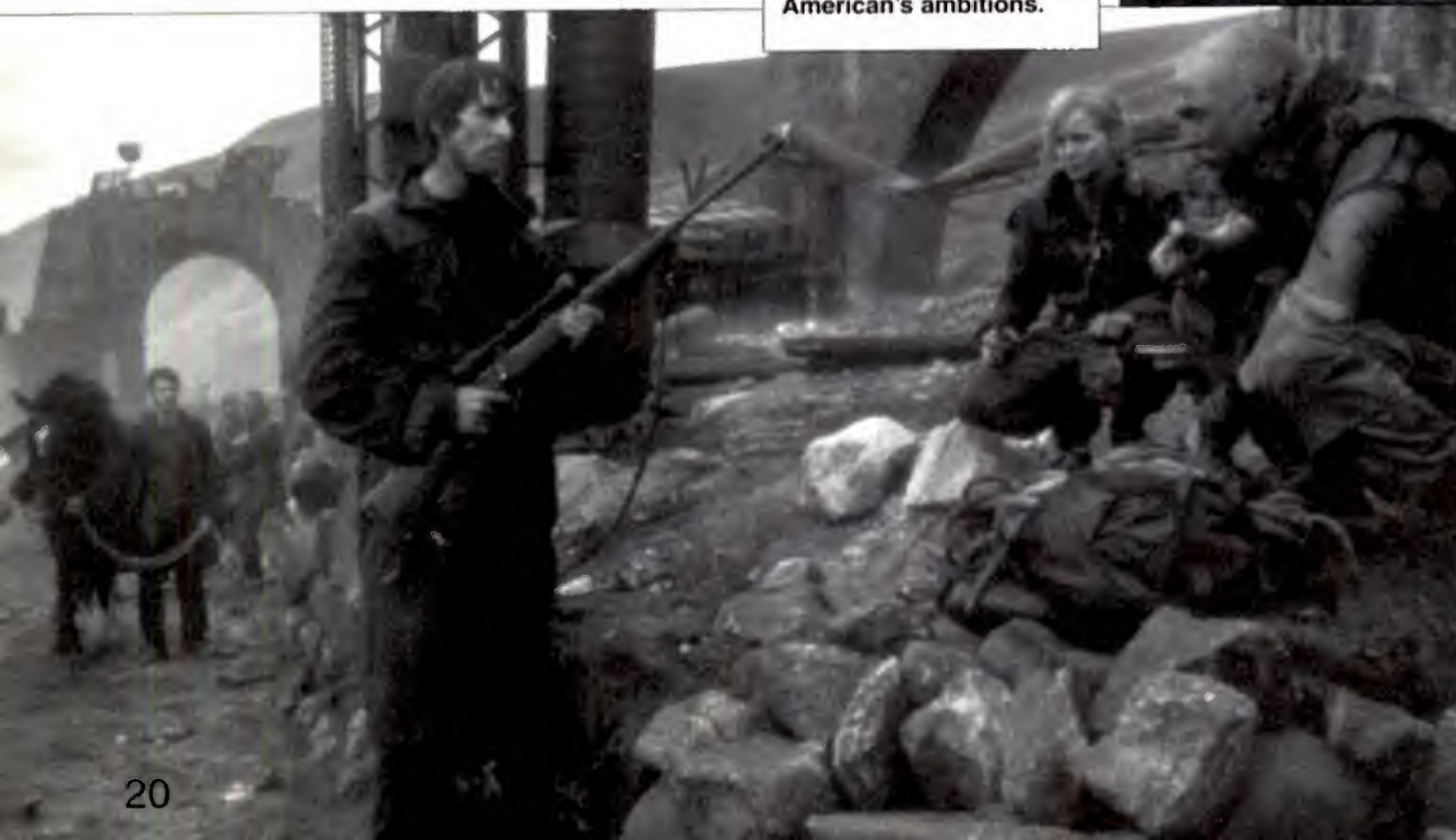
“As Van Zan, Matthew drops all the cuteness and charm from his other films,” said Bowman approvingly. “He's stern, nasty, everything required to get the job done. He has his eyes on the prize, and focuses on that to the exclusion of all else. He's a very simple character.” The parallel with Quinn is obvious. “They're both bull-headed characters, utterly stubborn and sure they're right. The trick is to show how they're both right.”

The most prominent female character is Alex, played by Polish model/singer/actress Izabella Scorupco, best known to Hollywood audiences as the Bond girl Natalya in Pierce Brosnan's outing GOLDENEYE. Alex is a helicopter pilot

and part of Van Zan's mercenary team. Bowman describes her as a hardy soul. “Like Van Zan, she's committed to doing her part in killing the dragons. She's steeled her emotions, she has no time to cry. She has a relationship with Quinn, but it's played very subtly in the background.” Alex's counterpart is Creedy, Quinn's right-hand man, who acts as a voice of reason and even makes his master laugh at times. Creedy is played by Gerard Butler, who



**FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE:** Reluctant to risk the lives of his people, Quinn (Christian Bale, left) remains wary of the American's ambitions.



took title roles in DRACULA 2000 and the USA Network miniseries ATILA THE HUN.

Children are an important part of REIGN's world. Quinn's community includes twenty-odd youngsters born after the dragon catastrophe, the hope for humanity's future. “The adults tell the kids stories, entertain them, try to give them a sense of normality in this dire situation,” said Bowman. “It's the adults who go and take the risks, leaving the children home.” Among the youngsters, Quinn sees the teen orphan boy Jared as his heir. “Quinn is mentor to Jared, training the boy to take over when Quinn dies,” said

Bowman. Jared is played by sixteen year-old newcomer Scott Moutter, who was granted time off from school to act in the film. He was told to watch *EMPIRE OF THE SUN* and model his performance on the young Bale.

Other supporting roles are taken by two *STAR TREK* alumni. Alice Krige, unforgettable as the seductive Borg Queen in *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*, plays Quinn's mother in the present-day prologue. Alexander Siddig, Doctor Bashir in all seven seasons of *DEEP SPACE NINE*, plays Quinn's radio operator Ajay.



**REAL FANTASY:** Director Rob Bowman (above center and left), worked to bring an air of tense desperation to *REIGN*'s future society.

aesthetic is straight from *JURASSIC PARK*.

"We've aimed to make the dragons totally photo-real," said Bowman. "That is, we wanted them to look as real as everything else, as real as the humans in the next frame. The difference between *REIGN* and a film like *DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS* is that the level of design work, behavioral work, the level of *finish* is much greater. It took months and months to get the level of detail we needed on the skin and muscle, as well as creating the dragons' attitudes and behavior. We're exploiting the highest end of digital technology."

Monster-makers Secret Lab began life as Dreamquest, an independent company that worked on *TOTAL RECALL* and *CRIMSON TIDE*, among others. It then became part of the Disney Motion Picture Group, before being absorbed into Disney's Feature Animation department (Disney is distributing *REIGN OF FIRE*). The titles on the company CV include *DEEP RISING*, the remake *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG*, *FLUBBER*, *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE*, *BICENTENNIAL MAN*, and spot-removal duties on the live-action *102 DALMATIANS*. A continuing relationship with producer Jerry Bruckheimer (*CRIMSON TIDE*) brought work on *CON AIR* and *ARMAGEDDON*.

Secret Lab's Visual Effects Producer is Erika Wanberg Burton, who's worked in effects for almost a decade. Starting at Industrial Light and Magic, she served on the first *MISSION IMPOSSIBLE* and *MEN IN BLACK* films, as well as the underrated kids fantasy *INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD*. Burton then moved to Secret Lab (Dreamquest at that time) to work on such films as *BICENTENNIAL MAN* and *THE KID* (Bruce Willis). Asked which films prepared her for *REIGN*, Burton cited the sea-

monster adventure *DEEP RISING*, which involved a large amount of CG character animation. "But it's astounding how technology changes, even in five years. There are so many things we can do now that we couldn't then. The advances are phenomenal."

Burton worked on *REIGN* for two years. Although the dragons are often unseen—true to the *JAWS* and *ALIEN* tradition—their restricted appearances involved huge amounts of CG. As well as the dragon designs and character animation, Secret Lab had to create atmospheric elements: not only obvious things like the dragons' fire, but also smoke, fog, and cloud. For example, an ominous swirl of embers heralds the approach of Ashley, the villain of the piece.

To help, the studio used a type of program known as CFD, for Computational Fluid Dynamics. CFD programs are used in scientific applications by such organizations as NASA, and most effects houses have a version of the technology. "The idea is to generate the different elements using one theory, one set of basic principles," said Burton. "We had an amazing group who created the program." Secret Lab's version of CFD is called Smaug, after the evil dragon in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. (Smaug also has a fireworks cameo in Peter Jackson's *FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING*.)

CFD programs are designed to work out what will happen in an environment with given parameters. The effects of one body or force on another, the consequences of climate in a given space, are worked out in incredible detail. In a NASA simulation, the purpose might be to predict a rocket's flight, or simulate how exhaust flames would burn across a launch pad. In *REIGN*, the CFD technology was used to compute how an imaginary creature with great speed and mass would affect the sky around it.

One person definitely *not* in the film, contra a long-running rumor, is Austrian oak Arnold Schwarzenegger. "There was something in the rumor," Bowman allows carefully. "Maybe he expressed an interest, or maybe it was just his agent. But the deal never got as far as me."

Meanwhile, in Burbank, the Secret Lab effects house was busy creating *REIGN OF FIRE*'s dragons. Despite his admiration for *JAWS*, Bowman was aiming for something more impressive than a mechanical shark. CGI dragons have had a bad name since the sword 'n' sorcery misfire *DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS*, but Bowman said there's no comparison with his film. If *REIGN*'s story owes something to *JAWS*, its monster

Richard Hoover, visual effects supervisor at Secret Labs, explained, "Smaug is economical—we only have to run the simulation once to generate all the info, which is good, because the simulation could take hundreds of machines and days to run. If we had to re-render it, it'd take forever! Once the simulation is complete, we can dial the factors up, down, tweak it as we want. We love real physics and aerodynamic accuracy, but we need to enhance them. We need a simulator with knobs on."

Hoover gives the example of a dragon flying through a ball of smoke. "The program starts by giving a mathematical interpretation of the situation. We need to know how elements will interact, what happens

when the dragon flies through the smoke and moves it around. Now, the result might be a little disappointing. For example: Running the simulation, we might see the dragon slices cleanly through the smoke, not disturbing it much. So, we take the forces at play and turn them up to make things interesting, while still grounded in reality. That's a case of the art department putting knobs on."

But what of the dragons themselves? To a modern audience, dragons have connotations of dreams and magic. Many fantasy illustrators draw them as wispy faerie creatures. REIGN's creators chose the opposite approach. According to Hoover, "Our one concession to the dragons of myth was that

our monster should be a bat-winged, reptilian creature. Beyond that, we did everything we could to make it realistic. We even had a doctor from the Los Angeles Zoo come in to look at early designs. We laid a lot of importance on making the dragon anatomically possible, building it from inside out."

"We started with the dragon's bone-structure and musculature," Hoover continued. "The dragon's rib-cage was taken from birds, with a keel-shaped sternum [breastbone] where the great flight muscles attach to the rest of the body. As with birds, the dragon's muscles are biggest under the shoulders, to flap the wings. The dragon's neck, head, tail and legs all resemble a croc-



**DEATH DEFYING:** The "Archangel" method of dragon extermination requires helicopters and skydivers, but doesn't sit well with the recalcitrant Quinn.



codile. We looked at crocodile and bird skeletons to see

how they could be combined. The dragon's scales are a cross between alligator and snake scales. They weren't 'painted;' instead, we used a CG hair-renderer to make them grow on the dragon's body. I don't know how much audiences will pick up, but the dragons operate on a very deep level."

Co-producer Barber believes that making the dragons realistic is the key to making them frightening. "The film suggests dragons might have followed a real biological evolution. Dragon myths go back thousands of years; what if they were grounded in fact? We're offering the audiences a different perspective from the dragons of myths and legends."

What about the dragon's famed fire-breathing? Here, the Secret Lab

team found their inspiration in the strangest source: "From the first days," said Barber, "we talked about the physiology of the dragons' fire-breathing, how it could be possible. Would the dragon's jaw have to be made out of bone? Then we heard about a South American bug that defends itself by shooting fire from its ass! It secretes two different chemicals, the same ones used in the production of napalm.

"We extended this idea to the dragon, giving it two bladders in its neck, one on each side, which accumulate each of these chemicals. When the jaw muscles squeeze, the liquids shoot out each side of its mouth and cross fifteen to twenty feet in front of the creature, igniting. In this way, the dragon never 'breathes' fire, so we didn't have the problem of how fire comes from its mouth."

Do the dragons have personalities? Said Bowman, "They're not sapient like humans, but the ones still alive are the most cunning of the species. They have an animal intelligence, like a creature in the wild that stays away from danger"—Echoes of the "smart fish" in *JAWS*—"They're not crazy monsters that break down the door to

**NEXT DEGENERATION:**  
Scott Moutter plays Jared, a teenager being groomed by Quinn for a leadership role.

eat you. They pick their moments and try to create moments. Ashley, the king dragon [a queen in early drafts], is *very* cunning, and bigger and smarter than the rest."

Obviously, there's little point building convincing and deadly monsters if they're not doing anything. As Hoover put it, "We were always thinking, *What is the audience looking for?* They want to see how the

dragons will attack, how destructive they are." The film is punctuated by several setpieces. One involves humans gathering food from a field when they're attacked. "It underlines how dangerous it is outside the castle," said Birnbaum.

Another major setpiece involves Ashley attacking Quinn's castle. "It was a huge challenge for us," said Hoover. "All we

continued on page 26

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REIGN OF FIRE

# Christian Bale

## From American Psycho to British Patriarch: Bringing Humanity to Filmed Fantasy

By Andrew Osmond

Christian Bale is best known for major Hollywood pictures like *EMPIRE OF THE SUN* and *AMERICAN PSYCHO*, but there's a smaller, more curious film lurking in his CV. "I'm not often asked about it," he said in mild surprise when *LAND OF FARAWAY*, a children's fantasy on similar lines to *NEVERENDING STORY*, was mentioned. Based on a book by *Pippi Longstocking* creator Astrid Lindgren, the 1987 Euro-pudding was co-produced between Norway, Sweden, and Russia, and represented Bale's first brush with fantasy effects cinema.

Not that *FARAWAY* was exactly cutting-edge. "It was filmed in Russia," he remembered, "and was very low-tech. There was one scene where we needed to have wind blowing and rather than use a normal wind-machine, it was cheaper to bring in a propeller-driven plane—presumably it was just lying around somewhere. So we did the scene, and of course, we couldn't hear a damn word over the propeller!

We had to read each others lips and dub the lines on later. The special effects were minimal, just a couple of shots. I'm glad to say things have advanced now."

A lot has happened in the

fifteen years since Bale's Russian adventure. For one thing, he won a dream part in Spielberg's World War II blockbuster, *EMPIRE OF THE SUN*, where he played the misplaced schoolboy hero. Since then, the Welsh-born Bale has been in a steady stream of roles. And while it may be that his part as Bret Easton Ellis' *AMERICAN PSYCHO* has received the most recent attention, his other roles range over the thespian map.

In brief, Bale has done pirates (an underrated TV *TREASURE ISLAND*, alongside Charlton Heston and Oliver Reed), Shakespeare (*HENRY*

*OF GOD*). Bale is also the hero in the upcoming dystopian SF picture, *EQUILIBRIUM*.

In the meantime, the actor appears in *REIGN OF FIRE* as Quinn, the character who starts the whole dragon mess in the first place. "At the start of the film, Quinn is the boy who stumbles in where he shouldn't and un-

**BURDEN OF LEADERSHIP:** Wracked with guilt, Quinn struggles to assure that humanity will not die out.



McConaughey], he wants to defend humans from the dragons. But the two characters are essentially enemies."

Given the set-up, one might think Bale is at a disadvantage. His character Quinn is the defeatist, believing the dragons can't be destroyed, and that the only way to beat them

is to have the stamina to outlast them. Van Zan, as Bale described him, is the "kick-ass, John Wayne-type" character, eager to whip some scaly, monster butt. Surely audiences will root for Van Zan all the

leashes the dragons," explained Bale. "[As an adult,] he's racked with guilt and responsibility, protecting a small community of people in a lonely fortress. Like Van Zan [the character played by Matthew

is to have the stamina to outlast them. Van Zan, as Bale described him, is the "kick-ass, John Wayne-type" character, eager to whip some scaly, monster butt. Surely audiences will root for Van Zan all the



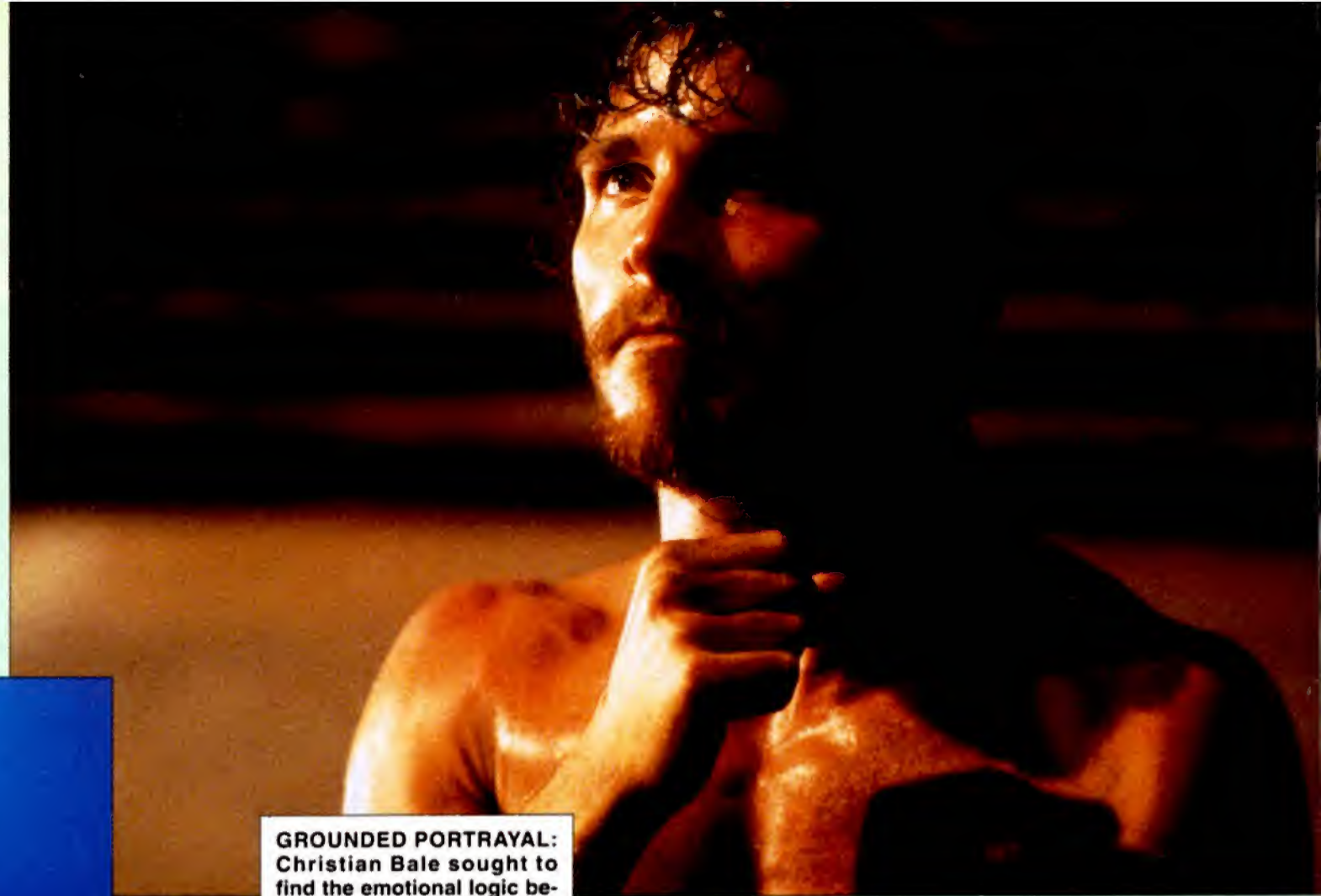
way?

Bale didn't think so. "Quinn's arguments with Van Zan create tension in the film. You see, Quinn is heroic—you see him taking care of the people around him. He's no wimp, he's ready for any fight. The point is that he respects the enemy. He has a real fear and awe of the dragons. He's one of the very few people who's faced the 'ultimate dragon,' Ashley. Over the years, Quinn's seen many people trying to fight Ashley and the other dragons, and he knows what happened to them."



Arguing Quinn's side, Bale saw Van Zan as making two mistakes: "One is, he reads Quinn's caution as cowardice. The other is, he underestimates the dragons, and pays for it later on. Quinn knows you can't just jump in and kill the monsters. It's not until Van Zan's learned that lesson that he realizes he must combine with Quinn, join forces against the dragons."

There was a time, not long ago, when talking about characters and motives in a monster flick was a pointless exercise. Bale knows the genre's reputation, summed up in the old gibe about the actors being jerkier than the monsters. One need



**GROUNDING PORTRAYAL:** Christian Bale sought to find the emotional logic behind Quinn's reluctance to confront REIGN's dragons.

only look

at Jeremy Irons in DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS, or Jeff Goldblum in JURASSIC PARK, to see how the field doesn't favor subtle, nuanced acting.

"I've seen so many effects movies where I felt they wasted opportunities," said Bale. "You just have a lot of dull scenes between incredible effects work. The only characters are bland heroes and

nameless idiots that you know are going to get killed. But from the start, Rob Bowman [REIGN's director] was adamant we weren't going to do that. For him, it was essential the humans were as grounded and gritty and muddy and real as possible. That way, the film would seem real to the audience and they wouldn't just say, 'That's ridiculous,' when the dragons appeared."

Bale went into REIGN OF FIRE with little idea of what to expect. "I'd spoken with actors on other effects films, and they'd warned me it was really dull, standing on stages in front of blue-screens. But, technology has moved on. There were

only two occasions during filming when I saw blue-screens: one outdoors, and one on a set. The rest of the time they just take the scene as it is and put the dragons in. Of course, you have to adjust to looking at something that's not there, but you can use your imagination, and the artists showed us lots of dragon pictures. It became easy, with time."

Bale remembered that, on paper, the REIGN shoot looked extremely daunting. In addition to the central cast, it involved up to 150 extras, many of them children, to play the castledwellers. Even more troubling, REIGN's shoot was long, lasting a full twenty weeks.

"Movie sets are stressful," said Bale. "The pressure can be good or bad for you. It's kind of accepted on the films I've worked on that there'll be a blow-up between the people on the shoot—it's unavoidable. So I looked at REIGN's schedule, and I was thinking, *my God, this is going to be one long, tedious effects shoot—we'll end up hating each other.* It's a great credit to the way Bowman ran the set that that didn't happen. I can honestly say there wasn't one blow-up during the shoot. There were disagreements, but they were talked through and worked out and the best decisions taken."

In fact, the most painful in-

cident on the shoot was pure accident. "There was one outdoor scene where Quinn and Van Zan had a big fight," remembered Bale. "So Matthew [McConaughey] and me talked through what we'd do. We wanted a messy, realistic fight, with both of us falling around, punches not connecting properly. We wanted to really 'go for it' on take one, with maximum energy. The idea is that it would look right the first time, so we wouldn't have to do retakes for all the different camera angles—I know that doing a fight again and again gives you a bloody headache at the end of the day.

"So, the fight started and I charged at Matthew, and we both rolled down a slope. That left us with a few grazes, but nothing serious. Now, the next thing that was meant to happen was that Matthew would get up and head-butt me. Of course, it wasn't meant to connect, but in the heat of the moment... WHAM! Full contact. It sounded like a watermelon getting broken in half. I remember the crew around us looking at me and wondering, *Oh my God, is he getting up again?* I did, and we carried on the fight. Of course, my forehead was swelling up beautifully by the end of the day, but the headbutt looked great on film. From all angles." **CFQ**

started with was a live-action image of the [intact] castle. Everything else was up to us. We had to add in the smoke, the fire, the effects of the wind blowing everything around, and Ashley interacting with it all.”

The standout sequence in REIGN is the

round clouds, with the chased man using clouds as concealment, flying between pockets and rivulets of cloud, jumping through thunderheads. But jumpers don't like going through clouds. Also, the whole idea is that it's a race between the man and

hit could kill him, or at least cause great injury. We tried our best, employing very experienced British paratroopers, but we couldn't do it. The cameraman couldn't get close enough, and we couldn't get the effects Bowman wanted.”

Hence, the resort to cloud-plates, green screen, and digital elements. “We considered fabricating everything, creating a whole virtual world, but that would have been extremely expensive,” said Burton. “So, we had to get a balance that was as convincing as possible. In Vancouver, we shot stunt men against green screens. They were on flying rigs with giant fans. The film uses background plates of real sky filmed over Vancouver, with CG cloud-wisps. You don't often see them in a plane, but occasionally you



**FROZEN IN FEAR:** Director Bowman has envisioned a world where technological advances halted with the onslaught of dragons. Right: Bowman on-set.

so-called “Archangel” setpiece. In this sequence, Van Zan's troops combat the dragons on their own turf—or should that be strato-cumulus? The mercs' plan is insanely simple: Three men jump from a helicopter, the first acting as live bait for the dragon, the other two chasing the creature. “It's offering meat to the dragon,” said Bowman. “The first man has to fall as fast as he can. There's no flapping hands or feet—he must fall at what parachutists call terminal velocity and hope the dragons will be slower! Meanwhile, the other paratroopers try to take the dragon. It's a very interactive setpiece.”

And a bloody difficult one, as the effects people found out. “It took a hell of a long time to plan,” said Burton. “We read the script, and spent ages asking how we would do it. We were hoping to get a lot of it in live-action, using stunt men on parachutes performing specific actions, and then insert the dragons. We tried to do that in Ireland, but there were two main reasons why we couldn't.”

Hoover took up the story: “Rob's vision of the scene was that it would all be based

the dragon. The bait had to be in tuck position at all times, free-falling at 200 miles an hour. If the cameraman was lying on his back in the air, filming this guy coming towards him, it would be very dangerous. A

glimpse them, little wisps of cloud. Of course, it had to be the right kind of sky, with an ominous and scary atmosphere. Then we sped it up, made it scarier.”

Some of the human parachutists were



CG, others were real. "The choices were made depending on how distant and how fast the characters were," said Burton. "Sometimes they were only motion blurs, where the audience wouldn't see their faces anyway, so we used CG. Obviously, the more money we used, the more realistic we could have made it, but we had to judge on the basis of a finite budget."

Aside from the Archangel sequence, the

ting is the Norman castle, where Quinn's people live. The technology runs to a bevy of military vehicles, such as a Chieftain tank and a Saracen troop carrier (an amphibious vehicle with six



**MEDIEVAL ORDER:** Bearing the burden of unleashing dragons upon the world, Quinn (left) hopes that humanity will outlast the monsters' reign. Above: Gerard Butler (on left), plays Quinn's right-hand man, Creedy.



"We had a short schedule, and thought we might have to move to Morocco. But we worked with the

Irish government. Though we couldn't use as many locations as we'd planned, we were okay."

Castle interiors were filmed at Ireland's Ardmore studio, which also supplied cavern interiors. There was more filming at the Dublin docks, in a disused factory nicknamed the "Pigeon House" because of the hundreds of birds nesting there. This hosted the largest set, a London-style street and square where the ill-fated subway construction takes place. (Part of the prologue, showing Quinn's journey to the site, was shot on location in London's Trafalgar Square.)

Did Bowman refer to past movies as models? Apart from taking general lessons from *JAWS* and *ALIEN*, the director said no. "I couldn't refer to 1950s sci-fi invasion movies, or Harryhausen monster movies. I couldn't say, 'Okay, what did the other film do at this point?' I was making my own footprints in the snow. It was exciting and frightening, working without a model and having to ask myself basic questions: whether a scene was working, whether it was convincing, did it flow, did it serve the dramatic rise and fall of the story."

Given Bowman's comments about unknown territory, who do the filmmakers see as the main audiences for the film? "It's primarily targeted at males between thirteen and twenty-five," said Birnbaum, "with a secondary audience of twenty-five to thirty-nine year-olds. But we think many women will like it too!"

Asked to classify the film, Barber commented, "I'd certainly say it was fantastical. By the purest definition, it is fantasy. But our intent was to make an action-adventure. The fantasy lies in the fact we've put the story into the future, and included an animal that never existed. But, we aim for an atmosphere of reality. We want to convince the audience that what they're seeing is both possible and realistic."

As in the glory days of '50s sci-fi cinema, the advice to audiences seems to be: Keep watching those skies. CFQ

other major setpiece occurs at the film's climax, when the characters come to a dragon-conquered London, a city that has been destroyed less often on-screen than, say, Tokyo or New York. Actually, Bowman was anxious that the destruction should not be complete. For example, he wanted Big Ben to be left standing, though the great clock suffers the indignity of dragons perching on it.

"Early in the planning, people were saying, 'Wouldn't it be great if Big Ben toppled over?' But I preferred a little bit of durability, a feeling of 'They haven't got us all!' It was okay to have a few notches out of Westminster Abbey, and Big Ben is damaged, but I wanted the clock still standing."

The London action returns the story to the subway construction site. As well as using the Pigeon House (see below) set, the sequence involved many FX elements. "We integrated a lot of miniature work," said Burton. "The models [including one of Big Ben] were shot on stages in Burbank. We used a whole tabletop to create a miniature London street. There are shots of London where the miniature is seen in the foreground and mid-ground, and behind it a water-plate of the Thames. Then there was a matte painting behind, and of course the CG dragon flying through it all."

Bowman sees *REIGN* as much more than a monster flick. Even the basic set-up crosses categories. The plot deals with future Armageddon, but the film's main set-

wheels). Not forgetting Alex's helicopter, which plays a key role in the Archangel sequence.

Birnbaum explains, "The *REIGN* world is our world stopped short by the dragon outbreak. There's no futuristic, science-fictional gadgetry. All the characters have to work with is technology from our present, and there's very little left when the story takes place. The only thing our heroes can do is put together what they can."

Color was one thing that drew Bowman to the Wicklow Gap, a high pass through the Irish Wicklow mountain range where filming took place. "In winter, the vegetation in the area has a very odd look," Bowman said. "It's streaked with browns, reds, and golds. It looks like lava, as if the landscape had been burned, which was appropriate for our post-apocalypse setting. Then, one spring weekend, everything turned green at once. Luckily, most of the location filming had been done by then. For the remainder, we had to remove the green parts digitally."

The exterior of Quinn's castle was built by the film team in the Wicklow Gap. Recalled Bowman, "We couldn't find a castle we liked that wasn't a designated national treasure—which would have cost quite a few dollars—or that wasn't surrounded by houses. Ironically, it was cheaper to build our own." The biggest snag for the filmmakers was the outbreak of Foot and Mouth in Ireland, closing much of the countryside.

# Austin Powers in *Goldmember*

*Facing Stiff Box Office Competition, Spycraft's Most Upright Member Proves a Hard Man to Beat Down (Okay, We'll Stop)*

By Ed Gross

New Line came pretty damn close to being shagged by MGM, when the latter filed protest over the use of GOLDMEMBER as the title of the third AUSTIN POWERS feature film. Claiming that the film's moniker unfairly violated the copyright of the 1964 James Bond thriller GOLDFINGER, it seemed as though MGM might derail a film that was already well into production.

"The irony of the whole thing—and MGM sort of successfully spun it into a copyright/intellectual property issue—is that the suit was never about anything except the fact

that New Line hadn't properly cleared the title with the MPAA," explained John Lyons, producer of the ultimately titled AUSTIN POWERS IN GOLDMEMBER. "There's a standard operating procedure where you post the title with the MPAA, everybody has five days to protest it and, normally, people work out a deal as they did on THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME. This one just sort of fell through the cracks at New Line. Then, New Line issued the teaser trailer and sent out the teaser one-sheet, and MGM felt something had to be done or else people would constantly flout the MPAA rules and just pay fines."

Not surprisingly, much of this struggle over the title was

politically based. Essentially, MGM wanted New Line to reschedule their Denzel Washington starrer JOHN Q so that it wouldn't open day and date with Bruce Willis' HART'S WAR. New Line refused, and the struggle began. Thankfully for the filmmakers, GOLDMEMBER will rise at theaters as intended, while New Line's sole concession to MGM is to make sure that a trailer for the new 007 thriller, DIE ANOTHER DAY, is attached to each print of the film.

Oh, studios, behave!

More important than all of this tussling over titles is the fact that, on July 26th, audiences will get the chance to

watch Mike Myers reprise his roles of super-spy Austin Powers (still groovy after all these years), Dr. Evil, Fat Bastard and, now, Goldmember, a new arch-villain who, through a tragic accident, has had certain aspects of his anatomy... changed.

"When Mike Myers and Michael McCullers sat down to work out the story," said Lyons, "the question they asked was, 'What are we going to do to make this film bigger, better, and funnier, and deliver on the bargain we feel we have with the fans?' So they cooked up the idea that this was a trilogy, that it had always been a trilogy, and

that this was the ultimate chapter. So it's the ultimate summation of this tongue-in-cheek world, creating even more mythology of where he's from, where

he's going, where his life is headed. We meet his father in this one, and we see his relationship with his father, how that's affected him, where that's taken him and where it is taking him."

Said returning director Jay Roach, who has helmed all three AUSTIN POWERS films, "When we made THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME, we wanted to make people feel like we were willing to extend what was there and exceed their expectations, rather than just deliver what they expect. We have to do that again, which, obviously, is tricky.

**LUCAS, EAT YOUR HEART OUT:** Director Jay Roach (left) and Mike Myers hope to bring a bit more emotional underpinning to what may be the final installment of the Austin Powers series.



We've actually gone in two directions: We've added more scale, more production numbers and comedic set pieces. It's just bigger, funnier, faster. That's what we are always striving for; making sure that people are getting the most enjoyment for the time they invest in it. Then there's another direction we've gone, which I think is going to surprise people a little bit: There's more meaning. It doesn't take away from the comedy, but it's more character, it's more story."

More character? More story? What the hell are they talking about? "No one is going to walk out of this film thinking it's been turned into Arthur Miller," Lyons said. "This is still Austin Powers."

As such, audiences can expect a plotline that runs high on the weird-o-meter. Dr. Evil and Mini-Me escape from prison and begin zipping through time, first to kidnap Austin's father, Nigel, and then to team up with Goldmember in 1975. Goldmember's plan for world domination is to somehow draw an asteroid toward earth to destroy the planet if his demands aren't met. Unfortunately, he doesn't

1975 who has been pursuing Goldmember on her own. In between all this, Austin must deal with his relationship with Nigel, while Scott Evil attempts a take over the good doctor's empire.

The real question, of course, is whether or not an audience that gets off on Austin Powers taking a sip of blended crap is going to be looking for the deeper elements Roach promises. "If you buy into these characters, you'll buy into it [all]," opined the director. "We're still doing it with a big nudge and a wink; it never gets maudlin. Even when we have emotional moments, we exaggerate them so much that people clearly know where we're going."

According to Lyons, what needs to be remembered is that Austin Powers is os-



**FOREVER FLASHBACK:** Mike Myers as Austin Powers joins forces with blaxploitation super-cop Foxy Cleopatra (Beyoncé Knowles) above, and, as Dr. Evil, reunites with Mini-Me (Verne Troyer) at left.



have the technology to carry off the threat. Evil, on the other hand, does, and brings Goldmember into the present, where a giant tractor beam will be used to take hold of an asteroid. To stop this time-spanning plan, Austin teams up with Foxy Cleopatra (Destiny's Child's Beyoncé Knowles), a cop from

tensibly British, coming from a tradition of British humor and British vaudeville and musicals. "I think that's really where that comes from. And, it is really interesting that that's the stuff that the kids go wild for. It's the thing that kind of makes it work from ages ten to sixty. Mike's sensibility is hugely informed

the thirteen year-old boy in all of us. That's just the truth of it. We are reaching to make you laugh in a way that you generally don't get to laugh as you supposedly evolve and become more mature. Comedy, particularly in the British school of comedy, which these films connect to the most, is a type of

comedy where it's almost deliberately not polite. "

by that."

"The gross-out humor," Roach interjected, "is always a tough line to walk. We always talk about it, because the films are ultimately made for

"These films have a spirit of celebration of something that is pure magic, pure joy, color, and dance," Roach offered as explanation to the character's popularity. "The character is a happy survivor. Above that, he also believes in this lore of himself; of being this super-spy—despite the fact he's not that good at it. Dr. Evil also believes in himself as the ultimate bad guy, and *he's* not that good at it. As much as you can look at our films and there are all these supposedly legendary archetypal characters, all of them are struggling to be barely competent at those things and are overcompensating. I think we actually identify with that."

CFQ

# HALLOWEEN: RESURRECTION

## *Myers Gets Wired in Webcentric Chapter*

By Bryan Cairns

Last time we checked in with the stab-happy Michael Myers, he had caught up to his estranged bloodline (Laurie Strode, as played by Jamie Lee Curtis) at a private boarding school. In HALLOWEEN: RESURRECTION, the eighth installment of the deathless series, Michael is back in prime form, and setting his sights on the small town where his murderous rampage all began. But this year, he's not the only one feeling a bit nostalgic.

"Oh, it's really fascinating to come back to a franchise after being away for twenty years," confessed director Rick Rosenthal, who also helmed HALLOWEEN 2. "In many ways, I know more, and in other ways, I know less. I know more, 'cause I've been working in the industry and I've shot thousands of feet of film. However, I'm still dealing with an audience, and an audience is incredibly unpredictable. You just never know."

Returning to wage the war against evil is scream queen Curtis. After stumbling into a world of alcohol and paranoia in H20, her character, Laurie, shifted into Ripley mode to kick her brother's ass back to Hell. Three years later in RESURRECTION, her circumstances are more dire than ever, with Michael closing in.

"It was amazing," Rosenthal said about reuniting with HALLOWEEN 2 alumnus Curtis. "I hadn't worked with her in twen-

ty years, but she's incredibly professional. I loved working with her the first time. She's so incredibly gracious and very smart, with a great sense of humor. Plus, she has a great consideration for other people. I think people are going to find her performance extremely good and very bold and brave."

The scariest opens in an

breathing space. As we went through the draft, her part expanded. There's plenty of bold scenes, and her exit definitely builds."

Exit? Come on, does that mean she bites it or what? "Well, this is HALLOWEEN," chuckled Brand. "Who knows who's really dead. I don't want to give too much away."



**EAGER ENTREPRENEURS:** Tyra Banks and Busta Rhymes tempt fate and the Shape when they stage a web event in the old Myers house.

erie sanitarium where Laurie has taken up residence as a patient—turns out she finally snapped after decapitating an innocent man in the last movie. Now Mike has come to visit his guilt-ridden sis during her padded lock-up period. More vulnerable than ever, Laurie could end up DOA if she's not careful, especially since one scene involves her dangling from the roof with her maniacal sibling looming over her. "Jamie's only in the first fifteen minutes," writer Larry Brand revealed. "She was originally scripted for a very short time, but everybody felt to be fair to the audience, and to the character, that she needed a little more

Fair enough. From there, the movie basically becomes a cat and mouse game when an Internet gimmick turns to horror. Digital entrepreneur Freddie (Busta Rhymes) comes up with a sure-fire moneymaking scheme: Invite six college students to spend the night in Myers' abandoned Haddonfield house. If they stay the spook-filled night (survive is more like it), their school tuition will be covered. At the same time, the whole event will be broadcast over the web. What could possibly go wrong?

Try everything. Michael shows up in the flesh and his mutilating habit kicks into overdrive. Unfortunately, as the blood bath is documented, net

junkies assume it's all staged and part of the show. Even the police brush it off as a Halloween hoax. Surprisingly, Brand credits Orson Wells' 1938 radio masterpiece *War of the Worlds* as the inspiration behind the plot. "I thought it would be interesting to make an updated version of that," he said. "In fact, I've wanted to do a film with the broadcast/Internet aspect for some time. When I was approached to come up with a concept for HALLOWEEN 8, I took the idea and applied it."

Since H20 provided the springboard for Hartnett's skyrocketing career, RESURRECTION has amassed the usual bag of easy-on-the-eyes actors. The possible victims-du-nuit include charismatic promoter Freddie, his lovely assistant Nora (Tyra Banks), political feminist Donna (Daisy McCrackin), legal student Bill (Thomas Ian Nicholas), future food guru Rudy (Sean Patrick Thomas) and Brand's "surrogate," Jim (Luke Kirby).

Ultimately facing off against Myers is heroine Sara (Bianca Kajlich), who starts out as the gawky ugly duckling, but is quickly forced to rise to the occasion. Not an easy task, considering her dilemma. See, she's scared of shadows, a theme explored from the movie's beginning, where a balding professor lectures on the need to overcome such a fear, right on through to the sortie in the Myers house, where you-know-who could be lurking in every corner.

Helping Sara cheat the grim reaper is an unseen benefactor named Myles (Ryan Merriman),

a young man she met in an on-line chat room. However, just like every other too-good-to-be-true story on the net, Myles isn't what he claims. Sara may have bought into his college charm, but the guy is strictly high school material. On Halloween night, he's at a party, but soon finds himself alone in a room, mesmerized by the webcast. Right from the get go, Myles realizes something horrible is going on, and that he may be Sara's best chance of survival.

"Here are these kids, watching an event occurring over the web and being drawn into the intrigue of it," said Rosenthal. "That interactivity is interesting, and when Sara's in jeopardy, the only people who can save her are the ones watching the webcast. They are seeing her through video cameras and the surveillance system; they begin to communicate with her over email, directly onto her Palm Pilot. I think that's a very cool aspect. They're like, 'He's coming up the stairs,' or [telling her] where to go, or how to get there, or not to scream. All those sorts of things make it very hip."

Yeah, it may be cool and modern, but since H20 grossed over \$50 million, the franchise gatekeepers wanted to be sure that what worked previously wasn't ignored. HALLOWEEN 3 steered away the traditional, straight-forward Myers massacre, instead telling a story of cursed Halloween masks that failed to find favor with audiences. An online survey conducted by the series' official site last year revealed that fans were clamoring for more Myers mayhem. Subsequently, the powers-that-be required a little bit of convincing before ushering HALLOWEEN into hi-tech society.

Arguably, the slayings themselves are amongst the most difficult but satisfying aspects of the slasher genre. Yep, let's face it, moviegoers anticipate Mr. Psychopath sadistically slaughtering his unsuspecting victims. Thankfully, it's all just a matter of how and when. Highlights from Rosenthal's previous H-days included boiling a nurse in

**DEAD LINK:** Webheads get more than they bargained for when Michael Myers' homecoming becomes an Internet sensation.

a Jacuzzi, and administering a needle in an eyeball. Ouch. Having already helmed what is considered the most violent of the series, Rosenthal admitted that fans are probably expecting a blood-splattered encore. However, the director said that while they've been searching for new and inventive killing techniques to keep the audience squirming, sometimes falling back on the old school can be as disturbing, if not more. "I'd rather err on the creative side," he explained, "but sometimes you're creative and it doesn't shock... We're looking at one of the killings that we think is creative but I don't know if its as visceral as a very simple [makes a stabbing sound]. In other cases, we wanted to use a lot of shadows, so we've incorporated them into the murders."

With that said, don't expect as high of a body count as HALLOWEEN 2. Anyone can stab 'em and move on, but Brand prefers building up tension before leading to a confrontation. Given the circumstances, that wasn't always easy. Although given free reign to run with the RESURRECTION concept, after the first draft and an outline treatment, execs started adding their two cents. Brand said sometimes a "more is better" combined with "if one murder is good, three is better" mentality developed. To

prove the point, the studio insisted that two guards at the mental institute reach a grizzly demise, a move Brand called "a horrible mistake."

Rosenthal agreed: "Six bodies in a ninety-minute movie is one every fifteen minutes. Not that they're shot that way, but it's hard to weave in too much more story if you keep having to kill people off. I also don't think its as gory as my first one, but don't forget, things have changed over twenty years. When BONNIE AND CLYDE came out, it was considered gory. Now, its pretty mild."

Not everyone can pull off those homicidal tendencies, though. Unlike the Camp Crystal Lake and Elm Street competition, there's been a turnaround on every HALLOWEEN movie. Filling the milky-white mask in RESURRECTION is stuntman Brad Loree, who Rosenthal feels embodies the malevolent Michael perfectly. "Brad has a sense of athleticism and a kind of power," he said. "When he moves, he kind of glides, and there's a certain quirkiness with the head tilt. I think he did a good job, not only physically playing the part, but also acting-wise."

In late 2001, HALLOWEEN: RESURRECTION had slipped into a few selected New Jersey theaters for special preview screenings. These gatherings allowed the filmmakers

to collect feedback and determine if touch-ups or major revisions were necessary. According to Rosenthal, the process involved sitting back with a huge audience and observing their reactions. Did they get sucked into the movie or not? Did they laugh at appropriate times? Did they laugh at *inappropriate* times?

Judging by RESURRECTION's release date shuffle from October, 2001 to April, 2002 to July, 2002, maybe not all is well in Myersland. Rosenthal admitted that fans loved the beginning, but part of that segment might be shifted to the finish. Even the conclusion itself is still being finalized in terms of how open-ended it should be. Rosenthal chalked up the delay to the FATAL ATTRACTION syndrome: Ever since that movie's ending was re-shot, studios have tinkered with the last few minutes to ensure viewers walk away satisfied.

Whatever the reason, Rosenthal doesn't appear too concerned. "I think we have a fascination with the bogeyman, and that's universal. As for what distinguishes Michael Myers from Freddy and Jason, I think it is a certain vulnerability in the lead characters. Certainly Jamie did it in the first two. That combination—a kind of invincibility and invulnerability, fighting each other—well, that's a pretty good contest." CFQ

By Paula Vitaris

*Ultraviolet* adj 1 : situated beyond the visible spectrum at its violet end—used of radiation having a wavelength shorter than wavelengths of visible light and longer than those of X rays; 2 : relating to, producing, or employing ultraviolet radiation—ultraviolet n

**U**LTRAVIOLET: A landmark 1998 British mini-series about a secret, government-funded squad that hunts down vampires in modern-day London, a town where, like the ultraviolet light the vampires shun, many things take place beyond the visible spectrum.

ULTRAVIOLET, comprised of six hour-long episodes written and directed by Joe Ahearne, aired on the U.K.'s Channel Four in September 1998. The series won a warm response from both critics and the audience, especially from fans of genre and vampire stories. (ULTRAVIOLET eventually aired in the U.S. in July and August 2000 on the Sci Fi Channel, and is now available in the U.K. and the U.S. on DVD and VHS). But ULTRAVIOLET is not your usual vampire story. There are no capes, pointy teeth, bats, wolves, gloomy abandoned castles, garlic,

or swooning maidens in nightgowns. In fact, the word "vampire" is never uttered by any of the characters. Instead, ULTRAVIOLET takes place in a sleekly modern, impersonal, chrome and glass London, with occasional forays into dumpy bedsits, expensive homes, airports, clinics, offices, bars, and most notably, the streets, where at night it's impossible to tell the vampires from "normal" human beings. On rare occasions, the natural world—grass, flowers and trees, the water of the Thames—intrudes on this constricted, artificial environment, but such forays seem almost beside the point. In ULTRAVIOLET, the world is as cold and inhospitable as a concrete housing block, and humanity has to struggle for every foothold.

ULTRAVIOLET treats its genre material with complete realism; its tone is similar to British police dramas, but with vampires, not serial killers, on the loose. In that realistic vein, ULTRAVIOLET also presents vampirism as a medical condition, an "infection" which can be detected under ultraviolet light and even treated if the victim has not actually become a vampire. Garlic does get a mention, but only to point out that it contains the active ingredient allicin. But the squad never refers to their quarries

as vampires, relying instead on the term "Code V," pronounced "Code Fives."

ULTRAVIOLET's human characters are portrayed with a kind of repressed intensity that turns even the twitch of a facial muscle into a major statement. They display little outward emotion, making their anguished reactions to troubling, and occasionally horrifying, events even more powerful. Communication is often non-verbal, and the audience has to listen and watch carefully for what is being said between the lines of dialogue. This is a show that requires multiple viewing to catch its subtleties. By the end, ULTRAVIOLET achieves an atmosphere of almost apocalyptic dread and suspense, as the squad contemplates the bad they've done in the name of what they take to be good, and as the Code V's plot humanity's ultimate fate.

Our entry into the world of ULTRAVIOLET and the secret squad is through the eyes of London detective Michael Colefield (Jack Davenport), whose best friend Jack (Stephen Moyer) disappears the night before his wedding, the same night one of their informants is murdered. Michael, who had trusted Jack implicitly, learns that Jack had been on the verge of being arrested on corruption charges, yet is only slightly less

## *British Television Breaks Form and Delivers a Revolutionary Vampire Drama*



**THE GOOD GUYS?:** The team charged with hunting down "Code V's" (from left to right: Idris Elba, Jack Davenport, Susannah Harker, and Philip Quast) uncovers serious questions about the value of humanity in the course of their mission.





What you can't see...

# ULTRAVIOLET

...can kill

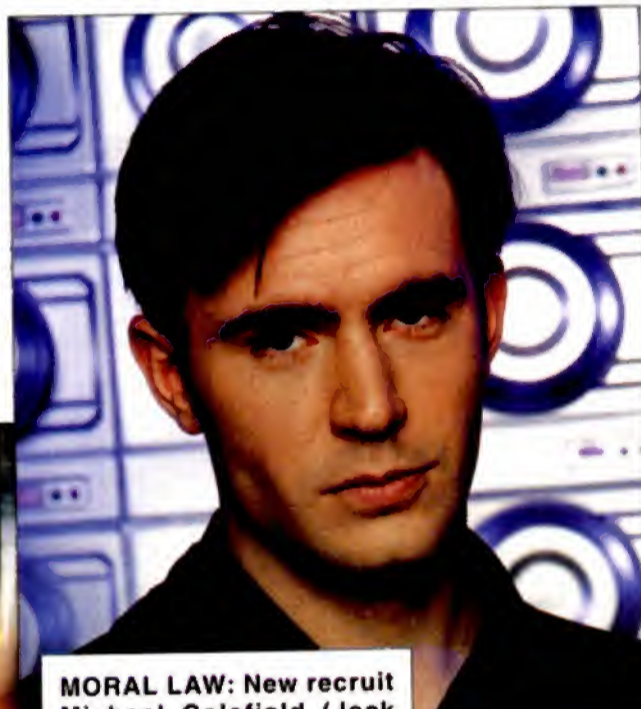
bewildered than Jack's fiancée, Kirsty (Collette Brown). The situation becomes even more confusing when Michael finds himself being interrogated not by the usual Internal Affairs types, but by three secretive people who refuse to tell him who employs them, or what they're looking for.

As the pilot episode unfolds, these three—Pearse Harman (Philip Quast), Dr. Angie March (Susannah Harker) and Vaughn Rice (Idris Elba)—gradually reveal to Michael the existence of Code V's, and their belief that Jack has "crossed over." Jack contacts Michael, and they meet at night. A terrified Michael is bitten by Jack, and then shoots him with a weapon given him by the squad, a video-equipped gun that shoots carbon bullets, reducing Code V's to ash.

It's hardly the end of Michael's ordeal. As the squad members inform him, the ashes must then be collected and stored, since the Code V's are immortal and can be revived if the ashes are mixed with blood. As the episode ends, Michael is invited to join the squad—they need someone with his police and detective experience. After a tour of their headquarters, including the ultraviolet-lit, ash containment facility, a reluctant Michael agrees, but not

recorded on video or audio tape, but in all other regards, people who once walked the daylight as humans do not abandon their identities for becoming Code V's. They have organized, they claim, because it's the only way to defend themselves from humanity, which demonizes them and wants to destroy them.

Michael's new vampire-hunting cohorts form an eclectic squad. Pearse Harman, a Roman Catholic priest disillusioned by a Church that can no longer give him all the answers, is the leader. Dr. Angie March joined the squad after her husband, a doctor and researcher in blood diseases, crossed over to the Code V's, taking with him one of their twin daughters. Their ashes are now contained at the squad's headquarters, with Angie only too aware of their proximity and



**MORAL LAW:** New recruit Michael Colefield (Jack Davenport) often questions the motivations of his fellow vampire hunters.

the possibility that they could return

some day. Vaughn Rice is a former soldier whose unit had been overrun by Code V's. He alone survived, despite being bitten.

The six episodes of ULTRAVIOLET maintain a remarkable unity of tone and visual style, thanks to the unusual decision to have one person, Joe Ahearne, write and direct. A fan from childhood of the movies, particularly anything in the science fiction, fantasy and horror genres, Ahearne graduated from the University of Bristol with a degree in physics, where he also did some post-graduate work in radio, film, and television. He then worked as an editor and director, making industrial training films while working on scripts of his own. He returned to London in 1995, and at the suggestion of his agent, stopped working on spec scripts and tried to get work in television.

Ahearne began pitching the vampire story that would ultimately become ULTRAVIOLET, even though a vampire story was

probably not the best way to break into British television. "There are very few outlets for science fiction and fantasy here, and part of that has to deal with budgets," Ahearne said. "We just don't have the cash that you have in the U.S. to do long-running series like STAR TREK. But it's also a cultural thing: The people who hold the purse strings, by and large, aren't that interested in science fiction, horror, or fantasy. British movies are the same—they're much more rooted either in comedy, naturalism, or period stuff. That tends to be the stuff that gets made over here. So it was quite difficult to get my idea off the ground.

"I wrote a treatment for this vampire idea that I had, went to a company that I'd had a few connections with, and after I'd done a bit of writing and directing for them, they commissioned the scripts."

That company was World Productions, which has produced a number of popular British shows, including the comedy/drama BALLYKISSANGEL about an Irish village, the medical show CARDIAC ARREST, and the young-lawyer show THIS LIFE. Sophie Balhetchet, the World Productions executive who produced ULTRAVIOLET, met Ahearne when he brought her two pages of his initial concept, then called VAMPIRE SQUAD. "I thought that the take on it was so smart, and such an interesting way to turn vampires into a hip, urban myth," Balhetchet recalled. "Our relationship really began from reading those two or three pages. Joe then wrote the script for what eventually became episode one, and it took life from there. Because the company was making THIS LIFE, and it was a show Joe liked very much, we invited him to write and direct two or three episodes of that show whilst we were setting up and financing ULTRAVIOLET.

"It's most unusual to get a show in the science fiction genre financed by U.K. TV. We appreciate American shows, everything from STAR TREK to BUFFY, and when we buy from America, our audiences love it. But when we try to make it ourselves, it seems to be in some odd way counter-cultural. British television grows out of the television of social realism and soap opera. We pay great homage retrospectively to films like BLADERUNNER or 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, but when you're offering up genre and non-realist pieces, there's a subtext that it's all a bit silly. It's quite difficult to get the genre taken seriously at all. There's a tendency for people to say, 'Oh, the Americans do that well, we can't do it.'" Based on the quality of the material, and because Ahearne and World Productions were in agreement that the series' tone would be as realistic and understated as possible, the company decided to take the risk and produce ULTRAVIOLET for British television.

Ironically, a fondness for gothic vampire movies like Hammer's horror films and the film version of Anne Rice's INTERVIEW

without misgivings about the squad's high-handed methods that do not always follow the spirit, let alone the letter, of the law.

Through this clash of mission and the law, ULTRAVIOLET explores a number of moral and ethical issues rarely touched on in the typical, "evil vampire" story. ULTRAVIOLET turns dramatic givens on their heads, presenting us with the possibility that humanity is the problem, not vampires. The Code V's don't kill when they feed—if they do kill, it's in self-defense. What contaminates the blood supply—environmental pollution, nuclear fallout, HIV and other blood-borne diseases—contaminates Code V's as well. As people, they are no different than before they crossed over: They may be immortal, they may need blood for nourishment, and they can't be seen in mirrors or

WITH THE VAMPIRE inspired Ahearne to do this very different type of vampire story. "The thing I thought was fantastic about INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE," said Ahearne, "was that it had one, fairly simple twist: You do the story from the vampire's point of view, and everything else kind of follows. I tried to think of some equivalent twist which would also be simple but that you could get a lot of dividends from. I started to work with the idea that if vampires really did exist, and had existed for hundreds of years, how would you deal with it rationally? I was trying to marry the approach of low-key British naturalism with a basically fantastical premise, partly because I knew that was the only way you'd get it off the ground here. You have to do it seriously.

"I wrote three or four pages, and that was just the bare bones of who the characters were and what the set-up was. What if the government actually knew about vampires and there was an undercover unit? We would update everything. It wouldn't be about mirrors, or garlic, or all the things that we're used to seeing in movies. A typical, contemporary film about vampires might be set in the present day, but nothing else would be updated. The vampire would still live in a haunted house, and you'd still have him going after the girl and the hero running to save the day, and you'd have stakes and crosses and all the trappings of the genre. I wanted to see if I could do a modern story without attending to all that. There had been films that had touched on that, like NEAR DARK, which was much more of a grungy, dirty take. I was trying to go for something which was cleaner and high-tech, and more like what the government would do if they got hold of this."

Ahearne also wanted the characters



**MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGH:** Dr. Angie March (Susannah Harker) has a personal mission in the extermination of Code V's.

in, but it's also something that interests me, to have something that's a little bit cooler, but still provokes an emotional response with the viewer."

To maintain a suspension of disbelief, Ahearne made vampirism a medical condition, an infection that could actually be treated. Angie, the squad's doctor, is often seen examining victims and running medical tests to determine their level of Code V infection. "We were trying to deal with the vampires as a scientific concept," Ahearne said. "We were trying to say, 'Okay, they can't go out in daylight, but that's because they've got heightened sensitivity to ultraviolet radiation.' In 'Mea Culpa,' there's a character who has xeroderma pigmentosum, which is a heightened allergy towards ultraviolet light. Basically, vampires are an extreme version of that.

"Also, once we decided to do something about vampires on a global-level, in an organized structure, it wouldn't really sustain the story if vampire bites were easily diag-

been seen in movies before, but here they also can't use telephones because telephones transmit voices as electronic impulses and then out the other end. So vampires in ULTRAVIOLET can only be detected by human senses. I suppose this is where my physics background came in.

"I wanted to be ruthlessly logical about the consequences of everything. I tried to invent an explanation for everything they could do, so it would be less easy for people to say [that] there is a God and therefore these are evil. They might just be creatures from evolution like the rest of us, but on a different path."

One trait the Code V's share with humans is superstition. In ULTRAVIOLET, religious artifacts like crosses and holy water do not necessarily ward off vampires. Instead, it's a matter of belief. If the vampire believes a cross is harmful, then he can be driven back by it. "In movies, for example, the priest is holding the cross out and the vampire doesn't stop. I think the notion is that the priest has to have faith in the

**"In a typical, contemporary vampire film, the setting is present-day, but nothing else is. I wanted something that was cleaner and high-tech."**

*—ULTRAVIOLET Creator/Director Joe Ahearne*

played with as much realism as possible, which grew out of his love for restraint in cinema. He pointed to Hitchcock as a superb director for obtaining understated emotional reaction on screen. For ULTRAVIOLET, he wanted what he called a "British sensibility, where people mask their feelings and the audience has to work a little bit more to figure out what's going on, because the characters aren't telling you what's going on inside their heads. I think that partly comes from the culture I grew up

nosable. I could have decided to have them bite people in the back, or somewhere not easily visible, but the neck is such potent imagery—it's so sexy. I thought we had to stay with that. We came up with this idea that vampire bites are invisible unless they're radiated with an ultraviolet light, a light the vampires are not particularly comfortable with. Another thing is that vampires don't appear in mirrors, and logically, if you extract like that, that must mean that you can't photograph them. I think that's

symbol in order for it to have efficiency," said Ahearne. "I flipped it around to say that, yes, vampires might sometimes express a fear of crosses, but that might be their own psychology. It might be psychosomatic; it might be some kind of religious energy. We tried to use that throughout the series. For example, in the third episode, 'Sub Judice,' where this woman is carrying a vampire pregnancy, she miscarries in a pro-life office where she's presented with

*continued on page 38*

ULTRAVIOLET

# Idris Elba

## The Multi-Talented Actor Attracts Notice as a Soldier Driven by Guilt and Anger

By Paula Vitaris

If you're looking for an angry young man, you couldn't do better than Vaughn Rice of ULTRAVIOLET. As portrayed by Idris Elba, Vaughn is a loner, a bitter and resentful ex-soldier who burns to take revenge on the "leeches" who killed his Army squadmates and almost killed him, too. Vaughn is haunted by his memories of the Code V (for vampire) attack, his being bitten in its course, and his decision to run while the others stood their ground and died—the scar on his neck is a constant reminder of the ordeal. Vaughn's life is now completely dedicated to hunting down Code V's. When he finds them, he doesn't ask questions; he shoots to kill.

Elba had done some acting in high school, but it wasn't until he took a two-year course in the performing arts that he decided to make it a full-time career. Unable to afford drama school, he plunged into working, and before long began appearing on-stage in small theaters. In his words, he "created a buzz," procured an agent, and has been working steadily since. He's been in a number of British television movies and series, including BRAMWELL and ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS, when he isn't working as an R&B and hip-hop producer and remixer with his production company, Front-

room Productions.

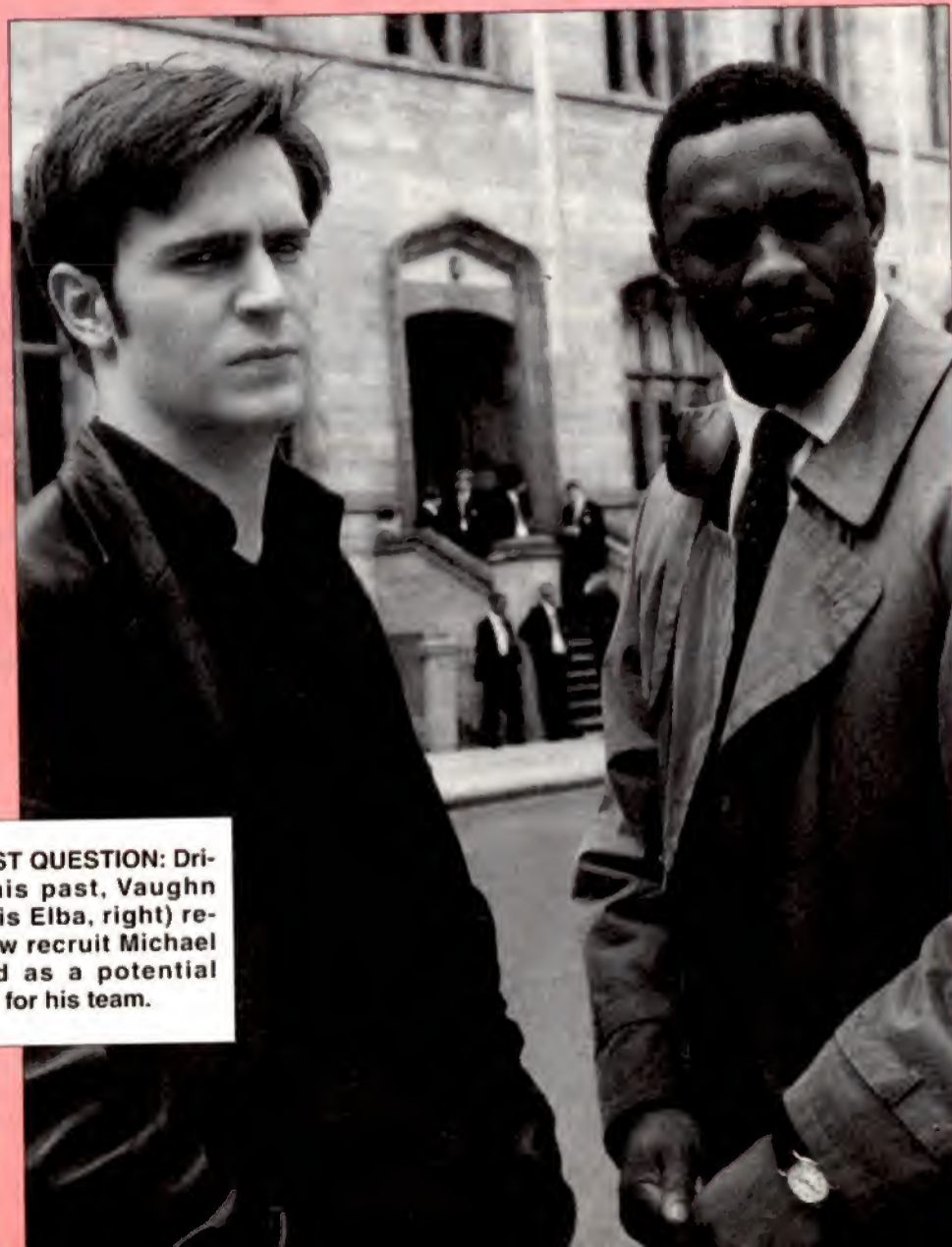
When Elba's agent told him about the ULTRAVIOLET role, and that his character would be a vampire-hunter, his reaction was a skeptical, "Hmmm-mm." Once he read the script and auditioned, though, he realized this was an entirely different spin on the well-worn vampire story, that Vaughn was a complex and richly imagined character. "As an actor, one is going to be very hard-pushed to get characters like Vaughn, who

have that range. At first it was, 'Right, great, I get to run around with guns and shoot vampires.' But then it became a bit more complex. Each of the main characters had their place within the group, and Vaughn's place was, *I don't like these things and I want them out*. He lost his whole 'family'—his Army mates—to the 'leeches.' And he was bitten himself, which makes it even worse. His hatred and his commitment to getting rid of them was even

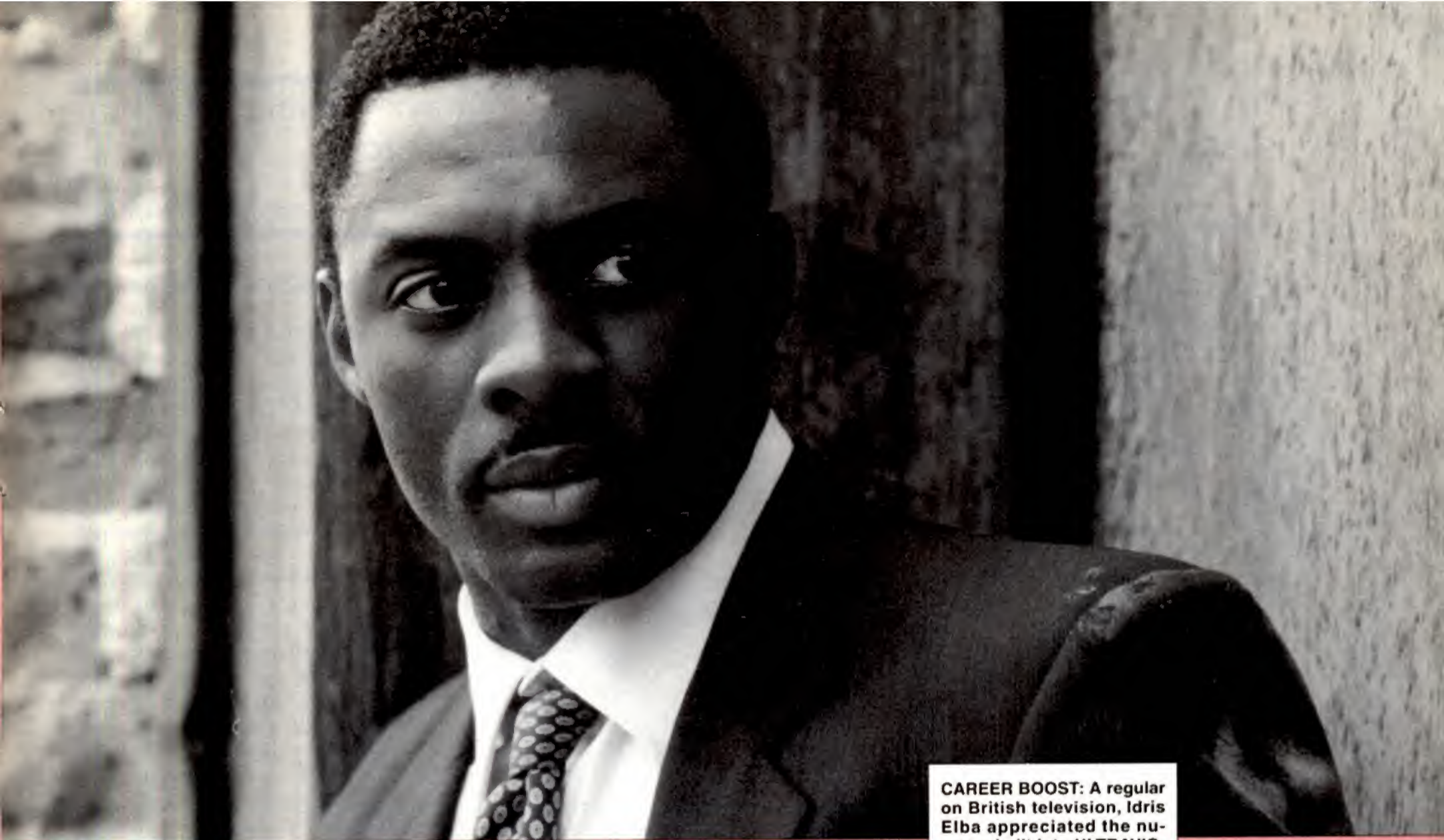
more than the others in the group.

"I thought Vaughn wasn't written like anyone else. [Writer/director] Joe [Ahearne] let [the character's] presence grow with each script. When I first read Vaughn, I saw him as a troubled character. He was a man who had a real past with this Army background. He was a guy that had no wife, no children; he had spent most of his life in institutions, the Army being the last of them. And now here he was in a 'normal' environment, so to speak, fighting an abnormal enemy."

Although Vaughn is a man of action, he is a man of few words (except for a couple of outbursts when his buttons are pushed). Vaughn's direct but laconic personality gave Elba the opportunity to refine his acting technique and concentrate on communicating Vaughn's thoughts and feelings in the most understated way possible. "His focus was very attractive to me when I first read the script. I was intrigued by Vaughn's silence and his directness, as well as by a compassionate side that we see later on. He had a depth to him. I wanted to play him as still as possible. I didn't want to play him as a hard, 'let's-go-get-them' man... Joe and I created Vaughn's idiosyncrasies as we went along. He is like a sponge. He absorbs stuff. He would not let on about how he was feeling, but the audience was very clear how he felt about anything, even though they didn't



**THE TRUST QUESTION:** Driven by his past, Vaughn Rice (Idris Elba, right) regards new recruit Michael Colefield as a potential weak link for his team.



**CAREER BOOST:** A regular on British television, Idris Elba appreciated the nuances built into ULTRAVIOLET's Vaughn Rice.

really see it.”

Vaughn's tough-guy stance includes a self-imposed vigilance on the other squad members. He is especially watchful of the squad's newest member, Michael Colefield (Jack Davenport). Vaughn doesn't trust Michael, realizing that Michael is conflicted about joining the squad, and that he is unable to sever his ties to his former life and friends; he sees this as a weakness that leaves the squad open to betrayal. Eventually, however, Vaughn thaws a bit towards the newcomer; for one thing, they are the only two squad members who have actually been bitten by Code V's. “They had that in common, and that jelled them,” Elba noted.

But Vaughn himself also has a vulnerable spot, and that is an unspoken love for the squad's medical expert, Dr. Angie March (Susannah Harker). The audience becomes intensely aware of Vaughn's feelings in a scene where Vaughn accompanies Angie home, and they have a drink and talk a little. Not a word is said about how they feel, but from the facial expressions and body language, and the way the scene is directed and edited, it's clear Vaughn

cares for Angie, and equally clear that she is unwilling, at least for now, to return his affection. The scene is one of Elba's favorite from the entire series. “I loved the very small subtleties in that scene. At that point, as an actor, I hadn't done very much in that subtle way, and I learned so much from Susannah, who is a fantastic actress, and from Joe. It's very difficult to do less on screen.”

But if there is one scene that fans remember with Elba, it's the one where Vaughn is locked in a warehouse with several coffins, all timed to open with a small explosive charge at sunset. It looks like Vaughn is doomed; either the vampires will kill him or turn him into a Code V. It's an intensely nerve-racking scene, as the minutes—and then the seconds—count down, and the resourceful Vaughn for once finds himself trapped with no way out. “It's strange,” Elba said. “That scene was at the end of a very long and cold day. That tension may have even helped the scene. It's very hard to pull off something like that on a film set. But Joe's direction was terrific. I remember thinking, *Wow, this is an action moment*, and that even

though I knew Vaughn was going to get out, Vaughn didn't, and I wanted to make sure that the audience wouldn't know either. We did about three or four takes, and we really tried to play it as if he weren't going to get out. I just went for it. I've only seen that scene once and I remember thinking, *Oh boy, that's kind of cool.*”

Elba was the only cast member of ULTRAVIOLET who was cast in an American version of the show. A pilot was filmed for Fox, but the series was not picked up and the pilot has never been broadcast. After some thought, Elba accepted the producers' offer to re-create Vaughn. “I was of two minds about it, although it was an opportunity for me,” he said. “As an actor, I wanted to come and work in American television. And I really, really missed Vaughn. I had liked what I had created in him. I liked what we all created in ULTRAVIOLET. I was really excited about it being done again for American television. The producers of the American version were huge fans of the original. They wanted what I had brought to Vaughn, so he could be exactly

who he was. Of course, American

television is different, the subtleties aren't the same. They wanted it to be a bit more of an action show. In that sense, you'd see Vaughn be more of a ‘let's go and kill them' type. But again, it was great to bring Vaughn back to life. It was interesting to do it with a new cast. The script was rewritten and elements of the original show were very much involved in the script. But it was a different take for me, an American version of ULTRAVIOLET.”

Elba remained in the U.S. after shooting the American ULTRAVIOLET pilot and will next appear in the upcoming HBO original series, THE WIRE. Playing Vaughn, though, will remain a cherished memory for Elba. “Living in the United States, I've noticed a lot of interest here about ULTRAVIOLET. I check the websites and they've picked up on exactly how we were feeling at the time. The audiences really caught the small subtleties.

“From day one, Vaughn and I were stuck together, and that went on for five months. Every scene, we were painting this picture together.”

CFQ

**“Northern Ireland was very much in my mind. You have terrible acts, but they’re backed up by an ethical system that we can’t relate to.”**

*—Joe Ahearne*

religious symbols. You think there’s an obvious cause and effect there, but I was trying to keep it more subtle.”

Ahearne had watched many British police dramas while growing up, and although he doesn’t think he consciously borrowed from them for *ULTRAVIOLET*, he can’t discount the idea that their tone influenced him. “I’ve seen so many of those shows. *BETWEEN THE LINES* was a great police show that World Productions made in the early ’90s about the police who investigate complaints against the police. That was a very morally dodgy show. I think that’s why, when I first went to World with this idea, I met with Tony Garnett, who was responsible for *THIS LIFE* and many other shows. The first thing he wanted to know was, what’s the tone? I talked to him about it, and explained it was serious and so on, and he said, ‘I’m glad to hear that, because if it wasn’t that way, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.’ He wasn’t interested in camp.”

The theme of perception is one of the overriding concerns of *ULTRAVIOLET*. Throughout the six episodes, Ahearne constantly plays off the squad’s perspective—“Code V’s are evil and we must destroy them”—against the Code V’s’ view of themselves as deserving of the same consideration as anyone else. “The situation with terrorism in Northern Ireland was very much in the back of my mind when I was writing *ULTRAVIOLET*,” Ahearne said.

the way vampires had always been depicted before.”

Ahearne said it took some time for him to settle on the title of the show, originally called *VAMPIRE SQUAD*. “I told people it was an imitation of *POLICE SQUAD*. To me that title was trying to combine an evocative, nineteenth century word like ‘vampire’ with a word that is mechanical, brutish and matter-of-fact: ‘squad.’ I was trying to marry two different things, the poetry and the science,

if you like. That title didn’t last very long. We actually filmed *ULTRAVIOLET* under the title *CROSSING THE LINE*. That title expressed the metaphors of the series, which were not just about crossing the line and becoming a vampire, but also crossing the line in terms of morality, because some of the things that the squad do are so unpleasant and dubious.



**COMBAT SHOCK:** Former soldier Vaughn Rice (Idris Elba, left) is haunted by his first encounter with Code V’s. Above: Michael consults with former colleague Frances (Fiona Dolman).

“Some people represent terrorists as evil

monsters, and certainly they do evil things, but at the same time, they can reason and have arguments for what they do. You can have terrible acts, but [they’re] backed up with a completely logical and ethical system which we can’t relate to. I suppose I was putting vampires into a political context, although not the Irish situation, necessarily. There are civil rights issues, gay rights and women’s rights, and this Code V situation could be regarded as one of the last civil rights struggles, if you treated it seriously. I didn’t want to make it into a political tract, but I wanted to get away from

*LINE* didn’t feel very evocative. It was a bit too clunky. By going through the image system of the show, ‘ultraviolet’ came out. The more I thought about it, the more that became the one, because with ultraviolet, you’re not talking specifically about daylight. I love vampire films which play with the word dawn or dusk or words like that to get at the fact that it’s daylight that kills these creatures. But what the show is saying is that it’s not daylight that kills the vampires, it’s the ultraviolet light. Also, ultraviolet is something which you can’t see.”

Ahearne had originally planned to write and direct just the pilot, not all six episodes. World Productions then commissioned him to write a second one. Ahearne noted that the producers tried to involve other writers, but in the end they asked him to write and direct all six episodes. “They decided it was worth taking the risk, because the show was a very particular thing. Someone couldn’t come in and immediately pick it up. I suppose if there had been a second series, it would have been easier to have other writers. I certainly hadn’t anticipated writing them all. I’m very grateful. It was quite the commitment—it was about a year and a half of my life between writing them all and



the five-month shoot. We'd shoot in five-week blocks, so we had something like twenty-five days to do a pair of episodes. We shot one and two together, and then took a week break to allow me to catch up on casting and locations and so on, and then another five-week block for episodes three and four, and another five-week block for episodes five and six. In fact, the shoot took seventeen weeks overall, and then it went straight into post-production.

"We shot all 'round London. Also, we had a studio base in Bray Studios, which oddly enough is the place where some of the Hammer DRACULA films were shot. That's where we filmed scenes like our main characters' headquarters, all the offices and the place where they keep the ashes of the undead, and a few odd kind of sets. But it was mostly a location show, and a lot of time and effort went into that aspect, because there were quite a lot of places to find. We set one episode in a fertility clinic ["Sub Judice"]. God knows how, but we managed to film in a real-life fertility clinic. We explained to the clinic staff, using storyboards, that it was about a vampire baby and other strange stuff, but they didn't seem to mind. Westminster Cathedral would not let us film there. We had a lot of trouble getting permission to film in churches. In fact, we weren't allowed to film in any. We had to film in an abandoned church for some of the key scenes. Places like Heathrow Airport were really nervous about filming vampire coffins being smuggled in, which I found bizarre. It did seem to rattle some cages for some reason."

Ahearne had not plotted out the story beyond the pilot, which he originally wrote as a ninety-minute show. When he started out to write the entire series, he had only a tentative idea of how the story was going to end up, although he knew roughly where it was going to go, since he had decided to shift some of the pilot's events, including Jack's revival, to the last episode, "Persona Non Grata." "You make up so much as you go along. I had an idea of the overall storyline. The producers hounded me, quite correctly, about answering a lot of questions, and I answered as many as I could as I developed the scripts. But I deliberately didn't want to answer everything, because there are certain questions that you can't answer unless you decide to do it from the vampires' point of view. I don't really know what vampires do when they're not doing nefarious things like beating people or plotting the takeover of the world. I don't know if they actually sit around, have coffee or listen to music. Once they've had a good

**LAST TEMPTATION:** Physical mortality and a crisis of faith bring pressure to bear on team leader Pearse Harman (Philip Quast).



feed—I don't think they do the coffin thing. I don't think they have to spend the daylight hours underground. We very rarely cut away from our main characters to see what a vampire was doing by himself."

Ahearne and Balhetchet discussed for hours not only ULTRAVIOLET's plotline, but the psychology of the characters as well. The pilot episode at first had been more of action piece, and Balhetchet convinced Ahearne to change the focus and make it more character-driven. "One of the things that is remarkable about Joe is that he is able to think through in his head extremely complicated plots," Balhetchet commented. "He will have a setpiece in his head, and then he will be able to think backwards to the plotting steps that get you to that scene. When I first started working with him, Joe did not think much about the psychology of character. People might think that because vampires don't exist, how would we know what a vampire thinks? But the best science fiction proposes the psychological what-if of how an alien or a half-human or an undead would think. So, I tried to get Joe to think seriously about psychology and character motivation in a genre context, just as I would ask a writer doing a piece about homelessness in Brooklyn."

The first episode, "Habeas Corpus," plunges the viewer into the middle of a sur-

veillance by Michael and Jack, and the murder (by the Code V's) of the informant they're watching. And then Jack vanishes on the eve of his wedding. "I'm always quite attracted to the idea of starting halfway through," Ahearne said. "But I thought, for TV in Britain, it was safer and better to lead into it a bit more, so you would start much more in a real world, and then gradually introduce the weirder elements. I thought it better to start off outside the group and bring a new person into it, rather than just to start the first episode. A few people criticized this approach, because this first episode is constructed around the main character not knowing what's going on."

"We find out in the first episode that Michael's best friend, Jack, is not only a crooked cop, he's also decided to cross over willingly and become a vampire. That's also one of the important things in the show: Nobody is bitten and forced to become a vampire. It's a moral choice, a moral decision, to become one. Michael kills his best friend, and he's left in the uncomfortable position of joining the squad designed to deal with these creatures in a shoot-to-kill way, and also of trying to keep contact with a woman, Kirsty, who had been his best friend's fiancée, and also is someone he's got feelings for himself."

continued on page 42

# Susannah Harker

## *Escape from Love-Interest: The Actress Explores a Damaged Soul*

By Paula Vitaris

**W**e very much go for the same sort of thing, very understated," actress Susanna Harker said of her collaboration with ULTRAVIOLET writer and director Joe Ahearne.

That commonality of purpose flowered in the character of ULTRAVIOLET's Dr. Angie March, a physician assigned to the secret squad hunting down the Code V's (otherwise known as vampires) in ULTRAVIOLET. Angie is a woman who lives in an emotional twilight after the loss of her husband, Robert, and one of her twin daughters. Robert, a specialist in blood diseases, decided to

cross over into the world of Code V's, bringing one of his daughters with him. Eventually, the squad tracked the two down and shot them, their ashes confined to the storage facility at the squad's headquarters. Angie lives with the knowledge that Code V's are immortal—if the ashes of her husband and daughter were reconstituted with blood, she could see them again—but they'd still be Code V's. When not working with the squad, Angie lives in a gated housing area with her remaining daughter, now twelve.

While Harker has not had much opportunity to appear in genre work, she is very familiar to British audiences through her work in films and television.

Americans know her best as the naive reporter in the HOUSE OF CARDS mini-series with Ian Richardson, and as the innocent and loving Jane Bennett in the 1995 BBC/A&E television adaptation of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE. Harker met Ahearne after viewing a short film of his called LAUGHING IN A DARK ROOM. "I watched it, and I thought it was one of the best things I'd ever seen," she said. "I went to meet him and had an extraordinary rapport with him and understanding. We're both coming very much from the same place."

She subsequently worked on a very low-budget film

with Ahearne. When ULTRAVIOLET came about, he wrote the part of Angie for her. The role seemed a natural for her for more than the obvious reasons—Harker is a great-granddaughter of Joseph Harker, a friend of *Dracula* author Bram Stoker, who borrowed the man's last name for his character Jonathan Harker. "I jokingly asked Joe, 'What are you doing?' He said, 'Vampire thing.' 'Oh, I love vampires,' because I had a vampire connection. So I jokingly said, 'Can I be in that?' It really was as flippant as that, and I didn't really seriously mean it. And he said, 'Well, I hope you will be, because I've written a piece for you.' I said, 'Oh, gosh! Let's read it.' It was wonderful. It's very much the kind of part I like to play, that of the emotionally closed, traumatized, nun-like thing. I enjoyed that element of it."

Angie's secret longing to again see Robert makes her vulnerable to the Code V's, who want Robert back for his medical skills. The squad learns that the Code V's need Robert for their experiments with synthetic blood, and Angie begins to wonder if perhaps they want peace after all, hoping that the synthetic blood can replace human blood. "Perhaps they don't want to come and take over the world. That gives Angie a chink of hope," said Harker. "She's always grasping at those straws. Perhaps, deep

**FRIENDS IN THE BUSINESS:** ULTRAVIOLET creator Joe Ahearne wrote the role of Dr. Angie March specifically for Susannah Harker, little realizing her association with vampire lore.







**HARD SCIENCE:** Haunted by the fates of her husband and child, Dr. Angie March shields herself from human contact.

down, she does want to get him back. She's been through such an incredible trauma. She's out of touch with reality now. She's in a kind of limbo, locked in.

"She has a mission, which is to find a way of bringing her husband and child back; it's a secret mission because her squad-mates mustn't know this. She has the most involving backstory in that respect; she has the strongest connection emotionally with the other side. She's therefore also a potential target for [the Code V's], and she has to then become very closed and numb and protected. You can see this in the design of her house with all its gates. She trusts very few people.

"There's no love in her life. In *ULTRAVIOLET*, several characters are in love with other characters, but there's no resolved love in it. I think that's unusual nowadays. There wasn't a love story, which I think is quite refreshing. I didn't have to play someone's love interest, which is normally what I do. And that had great appeal to me, to not be playing that stuff."

Angie's closest bond on the squad is with Pearse, even though he "killed" her husband

and daughter. Harker noted that Angie's only really true friendship with anyone is with Pearse. Not only are they confidantes, but Angie is also Pearse's physician, and diagnoses and treats him when he contracts non-Hodgkins lymphoma. She keeps his illness secret from Michael and Vaughn, the other squad members. "There's an incredible trust and loyalty between them," Harker said. "The bond is so incredibly deep. The relationship is cool on the surface—the British attitude is to repress oneself—but in reality it's very passionate. What you see is not what's going on. Their relationship is profoundly passionate and important, because it's been born of trauma, and that's what makes it so strong."

One of the most compelling episodes for Angie was "Sub Judice," where she meets a woman, Marion (Emer Gillepie), who, like Angie, lost her husband, Anthony, to the Code V's. At the end of the episode, Angie finds herself training her gun on Anthony as he cradles the dying Marion in his lap. Angie is both moved by his evident love for Marion, but repulsed by the way he let her be

used as a subject of Code V experiments. "Angie identifies very strongly with Marion, absolutely," said Harker. "At the end, when she blows away the vampire husband, she's blowing away her husband, in effect. She's faced with that. It's bringing out the trauma. But in doing that, she's conquering something inside her. It's very important, psychologically. He represents a sense of evil, and the temptation evil has for us, and she's lost her husband to that evil."

Could Angie ever love again? Harker surmises that if *ULTRAVIOLET* had gone on to a second season, that issue would have been dealt with. It is apparent that Vaughn Rice (Idris Elba), the squad's ex-soldier, has feelings for Angie, which she brushes off so completely that the subject never actually is discussed. "That's an indication of how closed Angie is and has to be," Harker said. "She can't let anything in, for her own protection. She feels for Vaughn, but she knows that she's kind of beyond him. She can't reciprocate. It's very sad really.

"It's a life suspended. She's like a nun: She has got a voca-

tion, she's completely dedicated. Everyone on the squad has to be, because the stakes are so high. And that was one of the things that attracted me to *ULTRAVIOLET*—the loyalty that these characters have between them."

Harker and Ahearne re-teamed after their work on *ULTRAVIOLET* for a Hitchcockian thriller, *TRANCE*—which Ahearne wrote for Harker—and they have plans to do more films together. "We're working on another project," Harker said, "which is my idea, but we're developing together. We have quite a strong working relationship and have quite an accord in the way we think and feel about stuff. He's a genius, I would say. I'm just lucky to be involved."

Harker sums up her time on *ULTRAVIOLET* as one that gave her the opportunity to do what she loves: "Going into those fantasy worlds, and having them made as complete as this was. I get very little opportunity with that sort of material in England. In America, you do a lot more of science fiction and horror stuff. For me, it was an extraordinary experience." **CFQ**

Ahearne had previously worked with Jack Davenport (*THE WISDOM OF CROCODILES*, *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY*) on *THIS LIFE*, and felt he had just the right presence for the bewildered, angry Michael. "Although *ULTRAVIOLET* was ostensibly a thriller/horror show about stuff that was very extreme, I felt it should all be played quite normally and matter-of-factly," Ahearne said. "Most of the time, the characters are pretty much on an even keel, except when they are in personal jeopardy or angry or furious. I was looking for actors who could bring dramatic naturalism to a high concept genre piece. Jack Davenport can do deadpan really well. There's a thin line between low-key and being not interesting, but I find him fantastic and charismatic. You want to watch him and you want to find out what happens to him. He engages the viewer without a lot of histrionics."

Ahearne had also previously worked with Susannah Harker, his Dr. Angie March, in a short film. "Basically, Michael and Angie are the two leads. You've got Michael who leads more from the heart. Angie, the only woman on the squad, is the one with the intellectual, medical background. Her emotional distance has to do with the fact that she's been so bereaved and so damaged by what happened to her daughter and her husband. She doesn't know why her husband decided to leave them all and become a vampire. She's really fighting and closing off her emotions, and she's not looking for any other relationship. We tried to hint at some of her feelings in later episodes. The third episode, 'Sub Judice,' about the vampire pregnancy, is the one that speaks a great deal to what's going on in her mind."

Midway through *ULTRAVIOLET*, squad leader Pearse Harman is diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma, leading him to question his faith in himself and the squad's mission. Pearse's illness, Ahearne, explained, was to give the character a reason to cross over so strongly that the audience worries that he may actually be tempted by the prospect of immortality. "Again, that was a decision made in the development of the series. In the pilot, Pearse revealed that he had cancer. That was changed so it happened in the middle of the show. One of Pearse's main problems is he's got evidence of evil, he thinks, but he hasn't got evidence of good. Vampires are the only proof he's seen of the existence of God. He works with a scientist—Angie—who can find a scientific solution for all the properties of vam-

pires. So is there a God or not? He doesn't know."

Idris Elba's character, Vaughn, is a former soldier and the squad's most determined member. Vaughn's vulnerable spot, apart from guilty memories of his devastating encounter with the Code V's when he was in the Army, is his unrequited love for Angie, who seems aware of his feelings but unable to return them. "Vaughn was the character who would be the anchor," Ahearne said. "You get the sense with Vaughn that he has no doubts at all about what he does. And while the other characters have qualms about assassinating people who for all intents and purposes seem human, even if they behave differently and have different needs, he never has any doubts. He seems to be the most soulless of the main group of four, but oddly enough,

noticably compelling, and seemingly reasonable in everything he says. Calmly and deliberately, Hoyle assails his two captors with nuggets of truth, picking at their most vulnerable spots. He tells Angie that her husband, Robert, had never stopped loving her and had intended for her to cross over to the Code V's with him. Hoyle then tries to undermine Pearse's faith by debating theology with him, and then, aware of the man's illness, suggests he choose immortality and cross over, just as Hoyle did after he contracted thyroid cancer from time spent at the Chernobyl nuclear disaster site.

Ahearne saw Hoyle as a mirror image of Pearse, and also his tempter. "Paul Hoyle is one of my favorite characters, played by a great actor, Corin Redgrave. The argument between Hoyle and Pearse is very much about, 'Well, have you crossed over for hu-

manity's good or just for selfish reasons?' I hope by the end you're not completely able to answer that question. It's morally open-ended. Hoyle was an ecologist; he's someone who's made a moral choice to cross over to the vampire side, and he's done it because of a disgust with humanity, and what humanity is doing with the planet. We find out later on in the series the vampires are organizing in a way they haven't done before. They want to take over because of what we're doing to the environment. We are their food source, and we're polluting the planet as well as ourselves—their blood supply—with illnesses like HIV. So in order to control the food supply and make sure that they can maintain their immortality, they've got to control us.

"Paul Hoyle, like Jacob, illustrates the idea that the people who cross over don't believe they're going to change, and once they've crossed over, they don't believe they have changed, apart from the appetite for blood and a few things. Paul Hoyle is someone who gets to express this over the last

couple of episodes when he's captured by our supposed good guys and he's able to expand the philosophy at much greater length. Also, I wanted to know what would happen if the squad should actually get a vampire under lock and key and talk to him. Usually you don't get much of a chance to negotiate with vampires. They're out there to get you, but in this situation, he's going to sit down and have a real one to one, again, like *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*."



**WHEN IT ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY HAS TO BE THERE AFTER SUNDOWN:** The prosaic details of the modern world, such as a time-release coffin shipped air express, give *ULTRAVIOLET* a palpable immediacy.

quite a few people seemed to find him the most attractive."

Although we meet several Code V's throughout the six episodes of *ULTRAVIOLET*, the most compelling of them is Paul Hoyle, played by Corin Redgrave. When the squad captures Hoyle, a former nuclear scientist and environmental researcher, in the fifth episode, "Terra Incognita," his interrogation by Pearse and Angie bring into high relief many of *ULTRAVIOLET*'s thematic concerns. Redgrave gives a supremely ambiguous performance, sinister, hyp-

ULTRAVIOLET ended on an ambiguous note, with the Code V's' ultimate plans still shrouded in mystery. A final meeting on a bridge between the squad and Jacob, who now holds Kirsty hostage, only leaves the squad members hugely frustrated. Michael is left shaken by what he's been through. Pearse is fighting a potentially fatal illness. Angie remains shaken over her husband's death. Even Vaughn seems exhausted.

A second season of ULTRAVIOLET would have seemed inevitable, given both the open-ended nature of the first six episodes, plus the popularity they enjoyed, but it was not to be. Ahearne, who would have been happy to do another season, felt that the end was due not only to a lack of funding, but also the short-run nature of British television. "They tried a few other writers, and they hadn't worked out. So I wrote all six episodes, and I wanted to direct. I think that's partly what killed off more shows. Normally, while a director's shooting the show, the writers are working on other storylines. None of that was happening on ULTRAVIOLET because I had my hands full directing and rewriting. So in the five months I was shooting and three months post-production, there was no work being done on development for another series. World Productions, happily, didn't want to give it to someone else—I was the person who should be doing it. I think if I

sat down, I could write another six, because there's other stuff I'd love to say with it, but we didn't have that at the time the show was going out. The other thing is that for British TV, it was quite an expensive program for a cult program, and of course there's the prejudice against genre in Britain."

Sophie Balhetchet also expressed her satisfaction with the way ULTRAVIOLET turned out. "I'm very pleased with its tone, its coolness, its stance to the world. I haven't seen it anywhere else. I like the way it looks at issues of abortion and human rights in one episode, and terrorism and incarceration in the last two episodes. The particular iconography of vampires is unique to itself in ULTRAVIOLET, and I'm very, very pleased with that."

ULTRAVIOLET might have had a second life as an American remake. Fox bought the rights and commissioned a pilot

**MEETING THE OTHER:**  
An opportunity to interrogate a Code V (Corin Redgrave) only stirs the hunters to further question their mission.



from writer/producer Howard Gordon (THE X-FILES, STRANGE WORLD), with Idris Elba reprising his role of Vaughn Rice. The concept, though, was not picked up for a series. "It's a strange situation, as a writer-director," Ahearne said, "because it's not like you've written a book and someone's doing your book. I wrote and directed a series. What I'd like is for people to see *my* series, selfishly, rather than for it to be remade by another. But that's not the way the world works." CFQ



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# SPIDER-MAN in the City

## Want to See All Those Great, NY Locations? Better Book a Flight to Los Angeles

By Ross Plesset

Spider-Man's main stomping-ground in the comics may be New York City, but the world he inhabited on-screen in SPIDER-MAN had to be depicted with a combination of New York and Los Angeles locations and sets. "A lot of what we did had to be done on stage," said producer Laura Ziskin. "That made the most sense. Initially, we would have liked to have shot more of the movie in New York. We shot about two-and-a-half weeks [there]. The initial plan was to shoot six weeks in New York. That would have been great, but it wasn't feasible from a financial standpoint."

One sequence, set in Times Square, was just too elaborate to film entirely on

location. "They were going to shoot big plates with the camera on a cable that runs back and forth," recalled supervising art director Steve Arnold. "It was [for] a POV of someone flying through there like Spider-Man. We would have had to put cranes in the street and run a cable. It would have required too much time blocking traffic. It was very difficult for the city... So we had to shoot part of it on location in New York—plates and things like that—and then we had to marry that together with the footage that we shot at a big parking lot at [Boeing in Downey, California.] We built the bottoms of buildings around

Times Square. Then, with computer-generated effects, we married those two together." Another portion of Times Square was built on Stage 27 at Sony. "One of the really big sets we did was this building facade. There's a big balcony that breaks off. It had a hydraulical-

tion. "The whole climax of the movie was something different," said Ziskin. "Then Avi [Arad] and I went to New York and worked with David Koepp. I drove in over the 59th Street Bridge [a.k.a. the Queensborough Bridge], and I thought, *Maybe this is a place for the cli-*

**REALER THAN REAL:** Director Sam Raimi (center) works with Toby Maguire and Kirstin Dunst on a recreated New York street in Los Angeles.



ly-controlled piece of balcony that tipped and fell."

The setting for the final battle between Spider-Man and the Green Goblin was actually inspired by a New York loca-

tion. The climax had originally been on the top of a skyscraper, but it wasn't feasible to shoot it."

The bridge sequence was also a combination of various locations and a set. "One of the really complicated things that we were asked to do was dupli-





**MULTI-MEDIA MANHATTAN:** Such New York landmarks as the 59th Street Bridge (above) and Times Square (left) were recreated through a combination of stage sets, CG imagery, and live-action background plates.



cate part of the Queensborough Bridge on-stage, because they just couldn't shoot everything on location in New York," continued Arnold. "We had to figure out parts that [could] actually be built affordably, and still fit on-stage. That was quite a big job." Part of the sequence,

where a sky tram lands on a garbage barge, was shot in Long Beach, California near the Terminal Island Bridge.

The final duel also takes place in a nineteenth-century small-pox hospital on nearby Roosevelt Island. A real location was the basis for an immense set dubbed "the hulking ruin." "The actual ruin is quite dilapidated, and not really safe for filming inside," explained Arnold. "We did film some exterior establishing sequences at the location, and also shot plates that were later used for

translight backings—large photo blow-ups of the area to be placed around our set."

The Daily Bugle exterior was represented by New York's Flatiron Building. The interiors were originally going to be depicted as sets, and construction began on them, but for cost rea-

sons, it was decided to go on location at Los Angeles's historic Pacific Gas & Electric Building on 6th and Grand. "It's used in tons of movies," noted Arnold. "It was used in *FACE/OFF* and *L.A. CONFIDENTIAL*... We had to duplicate part of it on-stage [in Downey], because of the Goblin glider flying through the window and the explosion."

A car chase was originally going to be shot in New York, but ultimately it too was lensed in downtown Los Angeles on 5th and 6th near Broadway. "The crew kept using the same few blocks over and over to make it appear the car chase was much longer," Arnold said. "Downtown Los Angeles is a little more user-friendly. In New York, just to block off streets and close things down is difficult. It's much more used by the public. In downtown [Los Angeles], there's nothing going on on weekends or at night." Other L.A. locations included a cafeteria in Dorsey High School, the Natural History Museum—which served as Columbia University interiors—and the Warner Bros. backlot for a scene where Spider-Man rescues Mary Jane from thugs and then

kisses her.

The scenes shot in New York included Spider-Man's heroic, burning building rescue. "We found a derelict building," said Arnold, "and they let us go in and build all these fire boxes in the windows to make it look like it was on fire."

Noted production designer Neil Spisak, "It involved creating a sense of danger and urgency with falling beams and fire right up against people's faces. Finding the right angles and the right way to do that set was very difficult. It doesn't look very complicated, but it took a while to get it right."

Other New York locations included the Oscorp office exterior at 57th and Lexington, a cemetery in Queens, Peter Parker's neighborhood in Forest Hills, the Battery Maritime Building exterior (with the interiors duplicated on-stage), a garden rooftop over Rockefeller Center, and countless rooftop plates from various locations.

"We visited so many rooftops it would make your head spin," recalled Sam Raimi. "I've seen New York from so many different vantage points now. [I've] climbed so many flights of steps." CFQ

# SPY KIDS

## THE ISLAND OF LOST DREAMS



### *They Became Spies Last Time Now the Real Fun Begins*

By Fred Topel

Robert Rodriguez had already envisioned SPY KIDS 2: THE ISLAND OF LOST DREAMS when he was making the original SPY KIDS. Fortunately for him, Miramax was so happy with SK1

“It feels like we made the first one just so that we could make the second one,” the director said. “The trouble I had writing the first one was I wanted the kids to already be spies, because that’s when the fun can happen. But it was more a genesis of how they become spy kids. They have to go save their

has a big cast of characters established from the first movie, and then even more people arrive in this one.

“There’s a lot more fantasy and magic and really just cool stuff. Every dream idea, imaginative thought I ever had, as a kid gets shoved into this one movie. That’s why I call it THE ISLAND OF LOST DREAMS.”

Of course, a good sequel cannot forget the elements that people liked in the original. But rather than repeat the endearing

family dynamic of SPY KIDS, Rodriguez expanded on it. “I loved the idea that they weren’t spies who happened to be a family,” Rodriguez continued.

“They were a family who happened to be spies, so I wanted even more of that. We introduce a spy grandfather in a flying wheelchair played by Ricardo Montalban. There is a lot of really cool family stuff at heart, [and characters] in the movie that design all the gadgets and the fun action stuff.”

In SPY KIDS 2, Juni (Daryl Sabara) and Carmen (Alexa Vega) Cortez face off against rival spy kids, Gary (Matt O’Leary) and Gerti (Emily Osment) Giggles. Rodriguez thinks having kids as both heroes and villains will doubly empower the youth audience. “Even the villains are kind of cool in their own way, and no one’s really bad,” he said. “An interesting thing that happens in this movie is they find that it’s not so black and white, you don’t really have a bad guy, so to speak. It has the subtleties I always wanted to see in a kids’ film. I wanted to offer up more real-life type stuff to kids, so it’s not so fairy tale black and white.

“There’s a lot more conflict and a lot



**THEIR OWN MISSION:** Now full-fledged, level-two spies, Carmen and Juni Cortez get to prove themselves worthy of their espionage-laden family tree.

that they greenlit the sequel even before the first film hit \$100 million in domestic gross. After filming ONCE UPON A TIME IN MEXICO, Rodriguez got the whole SPY KIDS crew back together, added some new elements, and made a film which excites him even more than the original.

parents, they learn on the way, and by the end they’re full-fledged spies. Then the movie is over. This movie starts the ground running: They’re already spies. They’re already level two spies and can tell the president what to do; they’ve got all the coolest gadgets. So it just starts running, it already



**FUN FOR EVERYONE:** The returning spy family of (left to right) Carla Gugino, Antonio Banderas, Alexa Vega, and Daryl Sabara get to face off against the Giggles siblings (Matthew O'Leary and Emily Osment, at right).

more questions that are raised. It's more interesting for me as a filmmaker, because I don't feel like I'm just making a kids' flick. Kids will enjoy it, because it [feels] real, in a fantasy film, of all things. It's exciting because you root for the bad kids as well—they're cool and do some cool things. They just have been steered wrong by wandering parents. There's lots of things to think about, but I think it's empowering whenever you see kids doing stuff."

For the Giggles kids, Rodriguez was originally worried he wouldn't have enough time to cast the parts, but was greatly reassured when he met O'Leary and Osment. "I didn't write their parts very big at all, because I didn't have much time for casting. When I cast SPY KIDS, I had six months to find Daryl and Alexa. I was only going to have maybe four weeks to find Matt and Emily, so I thought I shouldn't write a whole lot of stuff for them to do in the first draft in case I don't find the actors that are strong enough. When I found Emily and Matt, they were surprised when they walked on set because there was always new stuff for them to do. I continued writing for them throughout the entire movie, and getting their parts up much bigger than they ever were before. I think they got a kick out of that, and it gave them a lot of



confidence to know that I had that much more confidence in them that suddenly their parts were big. They were that good."

Coming back for the second round, Rodriguez said Sabara and Vega had more confidence themselves, thanks to the success of SPY KIDS 1. This time, the kids even contributed some ideas to the action

scenes, such as a fight during an OSS banquet that gets invaded by the villainous Magna Men.

"Alexa and I were having dinner somewhere after a premiere and she picked up some spoons and started twirling them around," Rodriguez recalled. "I said, 'Oh, we've got to do that in the sequel. You

should pick up spoons and twirl them expertly and toss them at the bad guys, and since he's got a magnet on his head, it sticks to his head.' Just really crazy stuff that goes on, and it would come like that: 'Oh, I've got an idea. That's kind of cool.'"

Stunt coordinator Jeff Dashnaw explained more about the banquet fight scene, which consisted mostly of practical stunts, including some wirework martial arts moves, and the CG-enhanced spoon bit. With kids fighting adults, the filmmakers had to accommodate for the height differences. "We tried to use the height difference for comedic purposes," Dashnaw said. "We tried to show the trickiness of the kids over the larger Magna Men, so they use a lot of the items that are in the set—curtain ropes, tables and chairs, desert carts. What we tried to do is show that the kids could outsmart the adults. We had probably ten to fifteen stunt kids working, and probably eight to ten Magna Men working, so each guy had one or two kids on him—some guys had three kids on them. We'd just talk [to the actors] and say, 'Keep away from the eyes, make it look real, have fun,' but mostly it was kids jumping on the big guys and hanging on. We had some 'slide for lifes'—some of the kids slid across the set,

up in the air. We had them hitting air ramps.

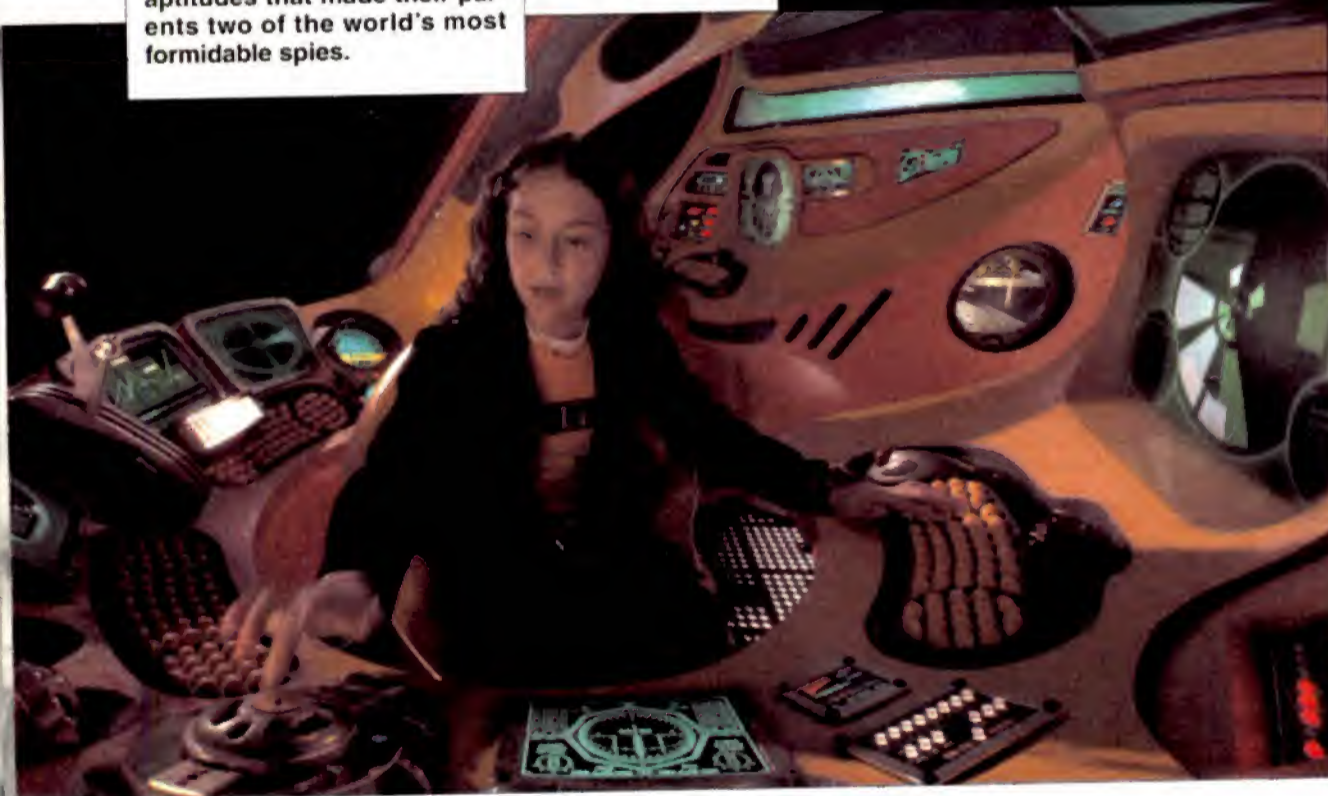
**IN THE BLOOD:** Both Carmen (below) and Juni begin to more clearly demonstrate the aptitudes that made their parents two of the world's most formidable spies.

lighter. By the same token, you have to be on your toes, because they go up a lot faster too."

SPY KIDS 2 is full of magical creatures for the kids to battle, most of which were created with computer generated effects. Rodriguez thought of Ray Harryhausen imagery to create things like Slizzards, Spider-apes and Sporks, but decided CG was more practical for his purposes than old school animatronics or stop motion. "There's just so much we had to do," he said. "The kids

I want."

One action scene that involved CG creatures has Carmen and Juni rappelling down the side of a mountain while fighting Harryhausen-esque skeletons. Rodriguez said that scene was inspired by JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS. "I just loved JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS, and I thought, *That's cool, but it's Jason. If I was a kid, I would want to be doing that.* So just seeing kids fighting classic-looking skeletons, which always look funny and are very whimsical



and very fun, it's really a hoot. It's something the kids are going to run back into the theater to watch again, just to see that sequence. They'll rewind it so many times on DVD to see what's going on. It's just a lot of fun, and that's what it's all about."

Dashnaw recalled the staging of the mountain scene, where he really had Sabara and Vega hanging from a mountain, 700 feet in the air. "We had them on a rock precipice. I had four cables on each kid and we rigged them to the rocks. So, we drilled into the rocks and made anchor points and had runners run down the side of the rock real tight and came up with cables to the kids. We had hip picks on them and we took our time with that. We had stunt kids up there to test and actually when we got really comfortable with the rigging, we asked the stunt kids to try to dislodge themselves so we could feel comfortable about it, knowing that they couldn't.

"I said, 'There's no way you can fall, and if you try to fall this way, I want you to see what happens. If you try to fall that way,

We had adults doing ratchets. It was quite a week."

Putting wires and harnesses on children had advantages and disadvantages, said Dashnaw. "It's probably easier on their bodies. No matter how comfortable or how custom you have a harness made to your body, it will bite after a while. You have to come down and readjust. That's just physics. For us, when we're using manual [human wire pullers] instead of machines to propel the kids, I prefer working with kids. They are

actually ride the creatures. We have a classic creature battle at one point, but those get boring after a while because it's just two creatures ramming each other. So I had the two rival kids, Juni and his arch rival riding on top of these creatures. Suddenly, it's between them and not about the two big creatures battling. That's just more eye candy. To do that animatronicly just would have been crushing to any budget, and I like to keep my budgets under control so that I have more creative freedom to do whatever



I want you to see what happens.' In addition to that, I put a pick point on the front of their bodies which I held manually and told them, 'If you guys look like you're going to get out of shape or lose your balance or anything like that, I'm going to jerk you down to the rock.' That was my last backup safety. I knew that if I had to, I could pull them straight down to where they were laying on the rocks. That was probably my biggest con-

**GOTTA GET ME THOSE:** Micro-processor-equipped sunglasses and flying wheelchairs (Ricardo Montalban demonstrates the latter at left) are just a small sampling of the fanciful gadgets employed by your average, well-equipped spy family.



body knows that it's going to take two or three times. Sometimes we've got it in one, sometimes we've got it in four tries. It's all the variables working against you."

Rodriguez shot SPY KIDS 2 entirely with High Definition digital cameras, after being turned onto the format by buddy George Lucas. After seeing Lucas's HD footage for STAR WARS: EPISODE II, Rodriguez did a digital test on a reshoot for SPY KIDS 1. He was so enamored with the footage that he has given up film entirely. He shot his last two films—ONCE UPON A TIME IN MEXICO and SPY KIDS 2—in HD and cannot stop praising the format. "As much as cutting on film versus cutting on an Avid changes how you see a picture in editing, that's how HD changes how you shoot a movie when you're on a set, but more so. It just changes the creative process completely, in a positive way. With film,

essentially you're shooting in the dark. You don't know until you get your dailies back if what you're doing is working, which is the equivalent of running through a busy room with the lights off. With HD, you're running through that room with the lights on, getting through much quicker and finding cool side routes. The actors see what they're doing and improve upon it, because they see it. It's like being at the premiere while you're on the set.

"On a movie, I think all directors feel it's such a drag shooting, because you never feel like you're getting what you want. You feel you made a million compromises because you were shooting with the lights off; you don't know if you even hit the canvas. With HD, since you're there seeing it, you know when you've nailed a scene. You know when you nailed a shot. You know when you got an emotion right, because you're seeing it. With that positive feeling, every day feels like Christmas."

Rodriguez noted that he is using HD for a different effect than Lucas, that his films

will come out looking unique to future STAR WARS entries. "George actually uses a filter system to give his movies more of an old-time movie glow. I shot mine naked. Mine are just very crisp and clean, so you really can see how sharp the picture is... Film deadens the colors. I told my DP on my SPY KIDS, 'Look at that wall back there. You know what color that is?' He said, 'It's gray, isn't it?' 'It's not gray, though—I remember, because I built that set. It's a purple color back there.' It should be, but film makes it look like it's just gray. HD brings back all the color that you bothered to put in to begin with. So, the movie looks like a Technicolor film."

Rodriguez already has an idea for SPY KIDS 3, and though he would not give any specifics, he promised it would be another completely different direction than SPY KIDS 1 and 2. He also promised not to overstay the welcome of the series. "I would stop it probably after the third. You want to keep the same kids. I kind of like seeing them growing up because there are multigenerational spies in the movie, now especially with granddad. You can see who they're going to grow up to be. Carmen's going to grow up to be pretty much like the mom. Juni's going to actually grow up to be like the dad. You never would have thought that in the first movie, but you start to see it in the second one."

Immersed in editing SPY KIDS 2: THE ISLAND OF LOST DREAMS, Rodriguez claimed the sequel was an easier production all-around than the original. "First movies are always harder, because you're not quite sure if people are going to accept the tone or how much fantasy you can put in. Even the actors aren't quite sure what they're supposed to be doing, and they don't have it figured out yet. After they see the first movie come out, they're like, 'Oh, that's the kind of movie we were making.' Everyone comes in with ideas for part two, so it just expands incredibly if you let it not be SPY KIDS GO TO VEGAS. It's not a rehash. It goes in a completely different genre direction, so it's really fun in that way." **CFQ**

cern on the movie, that particular scene, during the skeleton sword fight. I probably aged five years on that day. When I had the actual kids out there, the kids were more willing to do it than I was.

"Alexa's great. She's got some martial arts background, and she is very sharp. Her talent goes years beyond her age. She is a great kid to work with and she picks it up so fast. She's very athletic. Alexa actually did a lot of the tricky stunts herself. She does a series of back handsprings in the banquet scene, probably six handsprings, landing exactly on a mark take after take. I think if we let her keep going, she probably could have done twenty, but we ran out of set."

SPY KIDS 2 also involved more green-screen work than the original, which Dashnaw said was more tedious than the location work for both himself and the kids. "You have to be within certain parameters just to hit a mark precisely when you're starting a kid from point A and have to land them in point B. It's such a critical mark that everything has to be pretty much perfect. Every-

*Memories of...*

# George Pal

*A Long-Time Friend Honors One of  
Filmed Science Fiction's Founding Fathers*



*By Bob Burns  
as told to Tom Weaver*

I stood at the perimeter of the crater Harpalus, on the high northern latitude of the Moon. The view was breathtaking and completely enveloping. The “cracked mud” surface, dotted with mounds of rock, extended to the foot of the craggy hills in the far distance. Hundreds of stars shone fiercely in the velvety black expanse of space above; I could see our own planet Earth, hanging over the mountains in the distance. And there, situated in the middle of that barren lunar plain, was the atomic

rocketship Luna. Its four-man crew, outfitted in their bulky red, yellow, and blue spacesuits, had already exited and made the first historic footprints in the dust of the Moon surface. Now, slowly, laboriously, they began to lumber in my direction...

I was fourteen years-old.

This was just part of my day on the set of *DESTINATION MOON* (1950), America’s first “adult” space travel movie. Based on a novel by the celebrated Robert A. Heinlein, shot in Technicolor, and graced with the astronomical art of Chesley Bonestell, this classic motion picture was not only a pioneering Hollywood space adventure, it was also as technically accurate as the best sci-

entific minds of the day could make it. The man behind this groundbreaking movie: the Oscar-winning creator of the popular *Puppetoon* series, a forty-one year-old Hungarian-born producer named George Pal, a man I would later be honored to call my friend.

It was almost a fluke, the way I got invited onto that set. In school, I was always drawing pictures of spaceships and monsters and reading science fiction pulp novels. Those were the days when you could get in trouble in school for reading sci-fi—and get in trouble I did—but I couldn’t get enough of it.

Vern, one of my schoolmates there at Thomas Edison School in Burbank, knew I

liked this sort of stuff, and for some reason he took an interest in me because of that. One day, in the fall of 1949, he came over to me in the cafeteria during our lunch break and said, "Hey, my dad's working on some picture about a trip to the Moon, and he's taking me over to the set today. Would you be interested in coming along?" I said, "Y-y-y-yeah!"

It turned out that Vern's dad was a grip who happened to be working on DESTINATION MOON. At that age, I wasn't keeping up with what was going on in Hollywood news-wise, and I hadn't heard anything about the picture. I lived just a block and a half from school, so I ran home to ask my mom if it would be okay for me to go with Vern and his dad to the studio that



**DELUXE ACCOMMODATIONS:** Kapok-stuffed spacesuits and air-conditioned soundstages were used in the shooting of DESTINATION MOON. Left: George Pal and family celebrate Christmas on the moon.



to the sound stage. (Vern was a little shy too.)

My first surprise came as I stepped in through the sound stage door: The set was refrigerated.

Here I was, dressed in short sleeves for a typical, seventy-five degree California day, and the cold hit me as soon as I entered. So now I was "double chilled"—I already had chills from being excited, and now chills from being cold. But what I saw quickly put all thoughts about the temperature out of my head. There, on this largest stage of the General Service lot was that giant, now-familiar Moon set, with sand and rocks on the floor, the partial spaceship and the starry cyclorama. It was nothing like the sterile blue-screen stages used today, where the actors have to imagine what's going on around them and their surroundings are added in post-production. On DESTINATION MOON, everything was *right there*. To a fourteen year-old kid, especially one who loved space stuff, it was an unbelievable experience. *My God...I'm on the Moon!* I told myself, because it really felt like I was.

The reason the set was so cold, I soon learned, was because the poor actors playing the space travelers (John Archer, Warner Anderson, Tom Powers, and Dick Wesson) were suffering from the heat that built up inside their suits. To make their spacesuits look inflated with oxygen, they were stuffed with kapok, the insulating material

used to stuff sleeping bags. It was the stuff that Hollywood's greatest "gorilla man," Charlie Gemora, used to use in his gorilla suits—and which Charlie later told me never to use ("*Don't use kapok, whatever you do. It'll kill you!*"). But back in those days, the late 1940s, I guess that's all there was, so these DESTINATION MOON actors were dressed in spacesuits packed with it. Of course, the suits were also heavy, they had helmets on and, if all this wasn't tough enough on the actors, the sound stage rafters were loaded almost past the safety point with great banks of "Brute" arc lights, the hottest and most intense on the market, to simulate the effect of raw sunlight. That's why it became necessary to refrigerate the place to the extent that it was actually cold on the periphery of the set, and crew members were walking around in overcoats.

The ship was also really interesting. I thought it was metal, but it wasn't. Vern's dad showed Vern and me what it was. It was actually made out of plywood which had umpteen coats of paint on it so that the wood grain wouldn't show through. Years later, Paul Blaisdell did just the same thing when he made the saucer for INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN—he made it out of white pine and put coat after coat of paint on it, to hide the wood grain. It was kind of amazing to me to realize that those "two minds," Paul's and the crew of DESTINATION MOON, worked exactly alike.

John Archer, who played one of the spacemen, once complained to an interviewer that the cracked Moon surface made the actors' footing insecure, and that they had to look down a lot to avoid tripping and falling. He wasn't exaggerating. The surface was made up of scores of irregularly

afternoon, and she said, "Fine." It was great that the invitation *and* the visit to the set came on the same day; the fact that there was no lengthy advance notice made the experience even better. The anticipation, and the *suspense*, didn't have to build. It was just *right there*. Vern's dad picked us up in his car after school, and we went over to General Service Studios in Hollywood. Outside of a visit I had made to Republic during the making of the serial THE PURPLE MONSTER STRIKES a few years earlier, I had never before been on a studio lot.

Vern and I had passes, and we were cleared to go onto the stage, which was something of a privilege: The DESTINATION MOON set was pretty private and didn't play host to a whole lot of "civilian" visitors. What visitors they had were dignitaries: representatives from the Air Force, Navy people, and so on. A lot of important people were taking interest in this film.

I'm shy on sets—right to this day, I'm not the kind of guy who goes on a set and becomes very gregarious. I prefer to stay in the background because, frankly, I'm always afraid that I'm going to mess something up. In fact, once we were on the lot, Vern's dad had to prod us a bit to get us on-

continued on page 54

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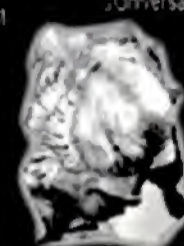
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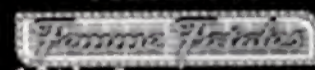


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**ORGANIZED INVASION:** Charles Gemora populated the briefly-seen Martian costume in George Pal's *WAR OF THE WORLDS* (left). Below: Pal (on ladder) watches Byron Haskin direct a sequence from *WAR*.

During one break, Vern's father took me over and introduced me to George Pal, which very much surprised me—I didn't hold out any hope that he would do that. (I knew who George Pal was, but just from the *Puppetoons*. The only picture he did before *DESTINATION MOON* was *THE GREAT RUPERT*, and I don't know if I'd even seen it at that point.) George seemed to be quite taken with me because I was a fourteen year-old kid who had such a love for this stuff. I guess at that

time not too many kids did—or, if they did, George wasn't aware of it.

Vern's dad said, "This kid, all he does is draw spaceships all

the time," and George seemed to be very impressed with that. I remember him saying, in his very heavy Hungarian accent, "I'm glad you like this stuff. How nice that you're interested in it,"

and



shaped slabs of plaster, six or seven inches thick, put together like a giant jigsaw puzzle. The gaps between some of these slabs was six inches or more—if you weren't careful, you could slip your foot down into one of those gaps and snap an ankle pretty darn easy. The spacemen, with helmets on their heads, couldn't see where they were walking—they could only see straight ahead unless they bent down. Practically the entire stage floor was covered with those jigsaw puzzle plaster slabs; in fact, they had to put the camera on a big crane so it could go in and out. They couldn't have a camera on the floor the conventional way, not with all those spaces between the slabs, and with some slabs higher than others.

Needless to say, between the starry cyclorama and the lunar surface and the spaceship itself, I was completely blown away by that set. And, to make the day complete, a little later on, maybe about an hour into our visit, they actually shot a scene with the actors—the scene where Archer stops his fellow spacemen from carrying the big telescopic camera back onto the spaceship and tells them that the ship is too heavy to take off again. It was fun to watch them shoot that, but I must admit that I would have rather been there one day sooner: The day before, they did a forced perspective shot of Archer coming down the ship's ladder, with three "little people" in spacesuits carrying a smaller version of the telescopic camera in the distance. Using little people made it look like the set was that much bigger, and the three spacemen that much farther away.

"We should have more people interested in space, because someday we're gonna go to the Moon." George knew that was going to happen one day, he simply *knew* it. So we had a conversation, but not a real big one, because I was so in awe—and so scared to death I was messing up something!

I didn't talk to George after that for a few years. Then I met him again a couple years later at a convention, a sci-fi con if I'm not mistaken, where he was giving a talk. When he was finished, I mustered my courage and went up to him and reintroduced myself. To my amazement he remembered me. "You were the young chap who came over to see the *DESTINATION MOON* set," he said. "I was very impressed to meet a young kid who was so interested in science fiction and science stuff."

By this time, he had finished *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE* at Paramount and was getting ready to make *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS* there. He mentioned that the Martian ships in his movie were going to be saucers, not the tripod-legged ships in the H.G. Wells story, but he didn't elaborate on it at all—he was keeping it quiet. I asked, "Are the Martians gonna be in it?"

"Yes," he said. "We were going to animate the Martian, but now we're gonna do something else..." Here again, he didn't tell me that much about it, he was pretty secretive at that point.

By this time, and for years to come,

George tended to be kind of close-mouthed on the subject of his future pictures. I'm sure this was a result of what happened to him on *DESTINATION MOON*. A low-budget company called Lippert saw all the publicity that *DESTINATION MOON* was getting and, deciding to cash in on it, they made their own trip into space movie, *ROCKETSHIP X-M*, which was in theaters ahead of *DESTINATION MOON*. From then on, it seemed to me George was a lot less "open" about the films he

was preparing. In fact, I later learned that he had a safe at home where he locked away scripts of his upcoming pictures.

Before we went our separate ways at that convention, George gave me his phone number at Paramount, and I think that if I had called and asked to visit the set of *WAR OF THE WORLDS*, he might have allowed it. Here again, I was so shy. (In fact, the only set I was on with George was *DESTINATION MOON*.) After this point, I didn't see George again for several years; the next time I established contact with him was in 1960, soon after I got out of the Army. He had just produced and directed *THE TIME MACHINE* with Rod Taylor as the Time Traveler, and there were rumblings all around town about it. I was so excited about seeing the picture that I got up the nerve to call his office at MGM. The person who answered the phone was Gae Griffith, his secretary, whom I had first met on the *DESTINATION MOON* set. (Gae was so devoted to George. George was her whole life, really.) Gae remembered me from way back and said that she'd tell George that I phoned—and sure enough, he called me back. He talked to me like we were old friends—“Bob, how *are* you? Bob, it's so good to hear from you!”

When I told him how jazzed I was about *THE TIME MACHINE*, he sent me and my wife Kathy invitations to an advance showing in a screening room on the MGM lot. A few of the actors were there, and of course George, whom I approached and thanked for inviting us. So we got to see *THE TIME MACHINE* before it was released, and I just melted. *THE TIME MACHINE* is one picture that really “did it” for me—I was just blown away by it. It immediately became one of my favorite movies, and the time machine itself, co-designed by George and MGM art director William Ferrari, became one of my very favorite movie props. I'll never forget what George told me about the design. When he was a young fellow in the old country, Hungary, in the days long before TV and even radio, the big event each year was riding around in a horse-drawn sleigh. So George incorporated the look of a sleigh into his time machine. Take another look at it, now that you know this, and you'll see it immediately. That part of the design was all George.

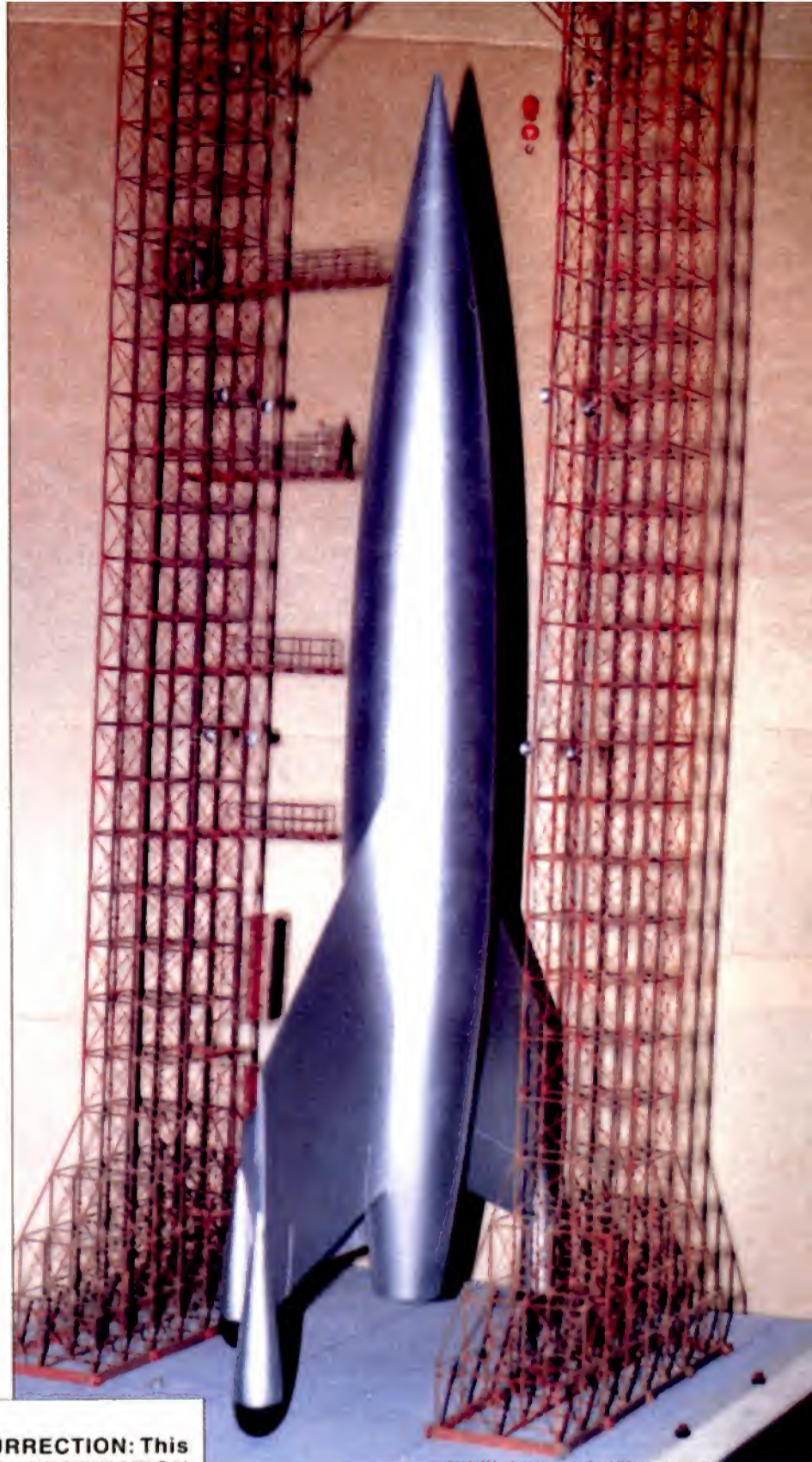
From that point—1960—on, George and I talked on the phone almost every month, about anything and everything. I grew to love the man. For one thing, he genuinely loved SF, particularly SF that dealt with exploration. He had an incredible imagination

and he loved fantasy in general. He was very happy making the films he made, and I don't think he ever cared to make any other kind—I don't believe he felt the least bit “typed.” He loved doing genre pictures, and he was very good at it.

The other thing was, he was innately a sweet, wonderful guy. The best way I can illustrate this is to relate what I was told about him by Wah Chang and Gene Warren, Sr., effects guys on many of George's pictures. (Wah and Gene were with Pal from the very beginning, right from the time he first came over to the U.S.—they were with him off and on all through his career.) Wah and Gene said that everybody loved George so much, they wanted to do good for him. To show you what I mean: *THE TIME MACHINE* was done for \$750,000, which is pretty cheap for a movie like that. Part of the reason it was that inexpensive is that George's crew put 150 percent into whatever they did. They wanted to work for him. They wanted to go the extra mile for him.

In November, 1961, the worst brush fire in the history of Southern California swept through Bel-Air. Driven by fifty m.p.h. winds, it destroyed nearly 500 homes, including George's.

George lost *everything*—not only his home, but also a lifetime of mementos. They weren't just objects to him, they were part of him. (He also lost his scripts for a number of forthcoming pictures—*THE DISAPPEARANCE*, *LOST EDEN* and *7 FACES OF DR. LAO*. He kept them in a fireproof safe and, sure enough, the fire didn't destroy the safe. But the fire was so hot that it incinerated everything in the safe—there was nothing but ashes when they opened it up.) I felt so bad for him, I began making copies of all the photos I had from *DESTI-*



**MODEL RESURRECTION:** This miniature of *DESTINATION MOON*'s spaceship Luna is a reproduction of the original version that was destroyed in a fire.

*NATION MOON*, *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE*, *WAR OF THE WORLDS*, all his movies, to replace some of the ones he had lost.

Then, I phoned the house one day when he was out and Zsoka said to me, “Bob, I don't know if it's a real good idea to do this. If something happens to them again...he couldn't handle it.” She knew that if he built up a new collection and then lost it a second time, it would just kill him. I pondered that later, the fact that George was so sensitive and sentimental that the loss of his mementos had devastated him that badly, and I marveled at the fact that a guy like that was able to survive in a tough town like Hollywood. He wasn't mean enough to be

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“The *DESTINATION MOON* set was nothing like the sterile, blue-screen stages used today. I thought, *My God, I'm on the moon!*”

—Bob Burns

in that business, it seemed to me, and I wondered at how he managed to do it.

George was never an aggressive guy, and (needless to say) that worked against him in Hollywood. As we all know, you've got to sometimes be a son of a bitch in that business, in order to "make it." But George would rather switch than fight. For example, he left Paramount after making *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE* and *WAR OF THE WORLDS* and a few other pictures there, because they messed *CONQUEST OF SPACE* up on him. Paramount put in a religious angle, made the commander of the ship (Walter Brooke) a fanatic, and George didn't appreciate that at all. And, being a passive person, the way he took care of that situation was that he left Paramount. It wasn't in him to go up against the studio, so he moved on. But then, years later, MGM meddled on *THE POWER*, and then Warners meddled on *DOC SAVAGE: MAN OF BRONZE*—George began contending with this all the time. When he was pretty much independent, like when he did *DESTINATION MOON*, he was fine. On *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE* and *WAR OF THE WORLDS*, Paramount left him alone pretty

who had splicers at work (I was a film editor at CBS). He phoned and asked if I'd fix it for him, and I said sure. When he arrived, I was getting ready to show a friend my 16mm print of *THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF MAJOR MARS*, a seven-minute featurette that several of my special effects artist-friends and I had made (I played Major Mars). I didn't want to bore George with it so I told him, "I'll be with you in a minute, just let me start running this little featurette thing I did." He said, "You did it? I'd love to see it!" So I showed it and he loved it—he was howling! And when it was over, he said, "I didn't know you were an actor." I laughed, "I'm not. That oughta be pretty apparent!"

But George was serious—"No, no, no, you were wonderful, you were brilliant!" he said. "If I ever do *THE VOYAGE OF THE BERG*, there's a comedic part that you're just made for." (*THE VOYAGE OF THE BERG* was a film he wanted to make about a giant iceberg the size of a city, that they were going to float over from the Antarctic to places that had no water.) I'll never forget George saying, "If I do *VOY-*

**THE TIME TRAVELLER RETURNS:** Rod Taylor resumes acquaintance with the restored Time Machine.



much. But later on, everybody started wanting to put in their two cents on his pictures.

I had a chance to be in one of George's pictures, but unfortunately nothing came of it. George used to give talks at colleges and he'd bring along a reel of 16mm clips from some of his movies. Well, one day the film broke—and I was the only guy he knew

who had splicers at work (I was a film editor at CBS). He phoned and asked if I'd fix it for him, and I said sure. When he arrived, I was getting ready to show a friend my 16mm print of *THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF MAJOR MARS*, a seven-minute featurette that several of my special effects artist-friends and I had made (I played Major Mars). I didn't want to bore George with it so I told him, "I'll be with you in a minute, just let me start running this little featurette thing I did." He said, "You did it? I'd love to see it!" So I showed it and he loved it—he was howling! And when it was over, he said, "I didn't know you were an actor." I laughed, "I'm not. That oughta be pretty apparent!"

George was a fellow who was always looking ahead into the future—and there was one time when he made a prediction

about *my* future. That story begins on the day in 1970 when I heard about the big upcoming MGM public auction, the now-famous one where they offered the ruby slippers from *THE WIZARD OF OZ*, costumes from *GONE WITH THE WIND*, the different saucers and ray guns from *FORBIDDEN PLANET*, a couple of the chariots from *BEN-HUR*—and, *my* personal "Holy Grail," the Time Machine. George had always told me that he was sure that I would someday add that to my collection, and now here—finally—was my opportunity. Kathy and I scraped up and borrowed a thousand bucks, hoping maybe I could get it with that, and we went to the auction, which was held in one of the buildings at MGM. Finally *THE TIME MACHINE* came up...and when it got to \$4000, I said, "Let's go. I don't even want to know." We left before the final bid. It ended up going for like ten grand to a fellow who operated a traveling show, carting movie props around the country in big semi trucks.

After the auction, I called George, very distraught, and told him I'd lost out. "Oh, you're still gonna get it," he chirped. "Someday you're going to end up with that machine, I just know you are."

Lo and behold, five years later, a friend of a friend was in an Orange, California, thrift shop looking for props for a movie—and in the back of that place, he saw the dish of the Time Machine. He called my buddy Tommy Scherman and said, "I think I found the machine that your friend Bob's lookin' for."

Two hours later, Tommy and I were down there, sauntering "casually" toward the back of the shop. And there it was. The chair was gone out of it, and the pods were all pretty much melted, but it was the Time Machine all right. The shop owner had sold the chair out of it to some barber chair collector, but that didn't concern me because George had given me *THE TIME MACHINE* blueprints, which included blueprints for the chair. I knew it wouldn't be hard for us to re-manufacture it. I ended up buying the Time Machine for a thousand bucks—exactly what I'd intended to spend at the auction.

Naturally, I called George as soon as I got home. "George, you're not gonna believe this, but I now have the Time Machine," I babbled out to him. "It's in bad shape, but I have it." He had such a great sense of humor. He paused for just a second, and then he said, very grandly, "Of course! You never doubt me! *Never* doubt me! I always told you, you were gonna get it." Then he laughed like crazy, that great laugh of his.

That was in 1976, the year after George's *DOC SAVAGE* played (briefly). Sad to say, there were no more films in George's future, but not for lack of trying. George went from studio to studio, trying to



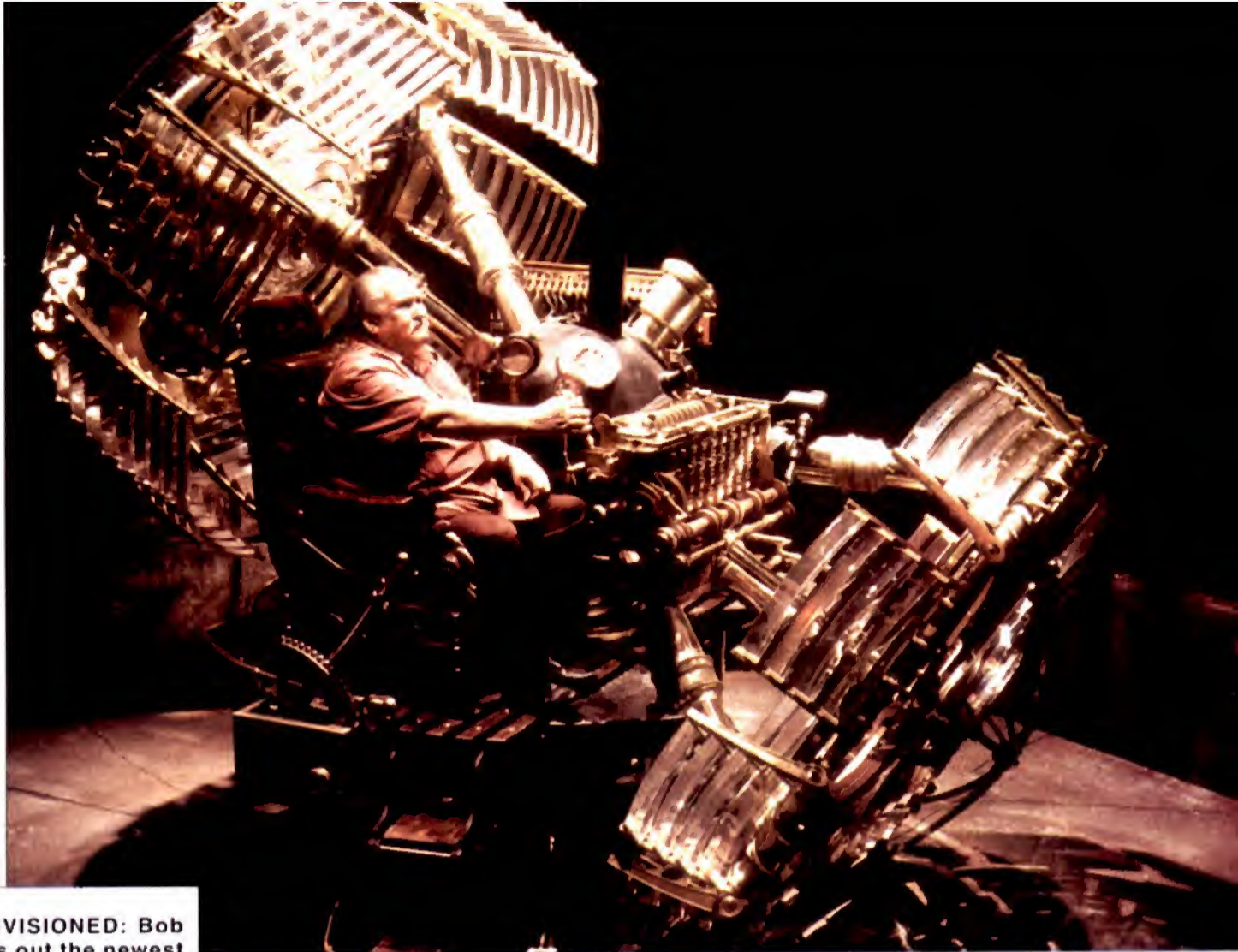
sell them on various projects—THE VOYAGE OF THE BERG, THE DISAPPEARANCE, a number of stories. And he always wanted to do a sequel to THE TIME MACHINE, right back to the time when he made the Rod Taylor original at MGM. TIME MACHINE II—that was his big dream. I own a duplicate of the tiny Time Machine you see in the movie, and I used to loan it to George and he would take it to the studios where he was pitching TIME MACHINE II, to have a prop to show them. (George used to own the actual little Time Machine in the film, but that burned up in his fire.)

Unfortunately, this was now the 1970s and most of the studios had changed hands since the days when George worked there. Younger guys were now running the show, and George was just an old man as far as they were concerned. Everywhere he went, it was always, "You're too old."

(Okay, he *was* old, but the guy's mind was still so sharp. He could have still done anything, no problem.) And they kept bringing up his last couple of pictures. "Wellll, THE POWER didn't do very well, and DOC SAVAGE was a total failure..." They basically just told him he was too old, and kind of washed-up.

The last time I talked to him, in 1980, he was as blue as I had ever heard him. He had tried to sell TIME MACHINE II, and his other projects one more time, and once again it was no-go. I don't recall if he told me what studio he had been at, it was one of the majors, but he said, "I've never been treated so badly in my life. These young studio execs just think I'm too old and all washed-up...they say nobody likes those kind of genre films any more..." I never heard him so despondent. He was always "up," he was never "down," there was always hope for anything and everything with George. But now, he knew there was no hope left. It was very difficult for me to hear him talking like this. Finally he said, "You know...I finally figured it out. I am too old. And I guess I don't have it."

I said, "George, that's not true, man. You're as bright as you've ever been. But you're dealing with guys that don't know the genre at all—they don't know the *business* at all. They're ex-agents, and they're ex-accountants, and they're ex-God-only-knows-what. But they're running the business now. The people running the business are not moviemakers any more." I tried my darndest to raise his spirits, but he said, "No. No. I'm through. I'm just not gonna try any more. I'm tired of being told that I'm an old man, and a has-been..." I tried to lift him up, but there was no way I could do it. After I got off the phone, I felt awful. I told Kathy, "I've never heard George sound



**PAL REENVISIONED:** Bob Burns tries out the newest Time Machine.

this way before. The guy's destroyed..."

And two weeks later, I got a phone call at CBS, in the morning, from Gae Griffith. "Bob," she said. "I have to give you some really bad news...I don't even know how to tell you..."

"George died last night."

It was a pretty big funeral—a lot of George's people turned out. A lot of his crew—nearly all of the oldtime technician guys who had worked for him and were still around were there. Ron Ely was there, Alan Young, I think. Forry Ackerman gave the eulogy. It was very sad, it was a collective. *We really miss this guy. He was one of the good guys in this world and...he's gone now.* Afterwards, a very few of us went back to the Pal house. It was me and Kathy and Zsoka Pal, and George's son David, and a few other close friends. Also some production people I didn't really know. And Gae Griffith, of course—she was with George to the very end. It was a very sad time. I felt the same way Gae did when she said, "I've lost the best friend I've ever had in my life."

The consensus that day, as we sat around George's big living room, was that he had died of a broken heart. The people running "the New Hollywood" had actually killed his spirit. George had an incredible spirit...and when that spirit died, *he* died. I think that's exactly what happened. I'm starting to tear up now, just thinking about it. It gets to me, to this day. Here was this guy who was just so full of life and so full of talent still. He could have done things. And this town beat him down. That sure helped kill him.

I try not to think about that last part of George's life—I have too many fond memories from happier times. One of my favorite memories of George crossed my mind just a few weeks ago, when I visited the set of the new TIME MACHINE with Guy Pearce as the Time Traveler. George and Zsoka had come to watch *The Return Of The Time Machine* a Halloween show we put on in 1976, and they stayed the whole evening long. The show ran about ten minutes (that's including turn-around time to get the audience in and out) and we did it thirty-five times that night, starting around five in the afternoon and finishing up at midnight. George just loved seeing people react to it. And after it was over, the man who created that marvelous movie sat in his time machine. It was something which he had never done during the making of the movie—he just never got around to it, or maybe never even thought about it. It was a thrilling moment for all of us. When he sat in that machine, he was like a kid in a candy factory—I had never seen him so excited. That excitement actually shows up in the pictures that my friend Joe Viskocil took that night. And one of Joe's shots instantly became George's favorite. He had it duplicated, and from then on, for the rest of his life, that was the one he sent out to anyone who wanted a picture.

I don't think I've ever met a finer man than George Pal. He and Glenn Strange, in my mind, were two of the nicest, most upstanding human beings on the face of this Earth. I'm a much better person for having known them. If I ever wanted to be like anybody, it would be like both of those gentlemen.

CFQ

# Dragons in Film

*They May Be Fantasy's Fiercest Icons,  
But When It Comes to the Screen,  
Dragons Don't Always Get Their Reign of Fire*

By Andrew Osmond

*Roaring he swept back over the town. A hail of dark arrows leaped up and snapped and rattled on his scales and jewels, and their shafts fell back, kindled by his breath burning and hissing into the lake. No fireworks you ever imagined equalled the sights that night. At the twanging of the bows and the shrilling of the trumpets the dragon's wrath blazed to its height, till he was blind and mad with it. Fire leaped from his jaws. Then down he swooped straight through the arrow-storm, reckless in his rage, taking no heed to turn his scaly sides towards his foes, seeking only to set their town ablaze.*

Thus, JRR Tolkien described the dragon Smaug on the rampage in the classic 1937 novel, *The Hobbit*, forerunner to *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*. If there's an obvious adjective to describe the action, it's cinematic.

Dragons seem to be naturals for the screen. They're awesome, they're scary, they're spectacular, which makes it all the more surprising that there haven't been more to be seen of them in the last century of fantasy cinema. Of course, they're expensive. Dragons devour movie budgets with the same rapacity that they consume young maidens. They may also be thought too obvious, too familiar and—following the *DUNGEONS AND DRAG-*

*ONS* role-play boom in the '70s—too geeky for the movies. But beyond that, it's tough for screen dragons to compete with their print cousins. No matter how good the special effects, they can't live up to the dragons that writers like Tolkien conjure up in the imagination.

Recently, dragons have been reduced to cameos. Smaug fans have had to console themselves with Rankin-Bass' 1977 TV adaptation of *THE HOBBIT*, with Richard Boone voicing the beast (he also had a brief appearance in Peter Jackson's *LORD OF THE RINGS*, as a firework). Norbert, the cute baby dragon in *HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S*

*STONE*, had barely enough time to sing Robbie Coltrane's beard before being whisked out of the film—we can expect more dragon action if Warners gets to Harry's fourth adventure, *Goblet of Fire*. There was also Falkor, the too-cuddly luck-dragon in the *NEVER-ENDING STORY* trilogy, who mostly served as a steed or onlooker, and chased teen bullies in the less-than-uplifting end to the first film. Not exactly star turns.

It was not always so. Back in the twenties, one of the greatest European directors was giving dragons featured billing. In 1924, Fritz Lang made *SIEGFRIED*, the first half of his two-part Norse epic *DIE NIBELUNGEN*, based on the same myths that inspired Wagner's Ring cycle. In the course of his adventures, the hero Siegfried fights and slays the dragon Fafnir, a fifty-foot long contraption that was operated by a crew of men hidden inside. The dragon looks mechanical now, but it was state-of-the-art for its time, though overshadowed by the sci-fi creations of Lang's later *METROPOLIS*.

The same year saw the first *THIEF OF BAGDAD*, in which Douglas Fairbanks' hero bags a dragon in the Valley of Monsters, though frankly all the fantasy creatures play second fiddle to the energetic Fairbanks. For the next three decades, fantasy cinema pretty much passed on dragons, favoring big apes, wicked witches, and larger-than-life genies.

**SHORTCHANGED SHOWCASE:** *DRAGONHEART* had an impressive, Tippett-designed monster, but squandered the beast by making it an anthropomorphized, Sean Connery-voiced comedian.



Japan's GODZILLA, introduced in 1954, was arguably a dragon, given his ability to breathe radioactive fire. A later, low-tech Japanese creation, GHIDRAH THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER (1965), was also decidedly dragonish, even if it was meant to be an invader from outer space.

Dragons reappeared in Hollywood in 1958, when Ray Harryhausen included one in his seminal fantasy film SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD, allowing his dragon to kill a Cyclops and crush the bad guy (princess-shrinking Torin Thatcher). Sadly, though, this dragon is a decidedly average creation, no match for the Cyclops in terms of screen presence. Some of SINBAD's team reunited to make the cut-price follow-up JACK THE GIANT KILLER (1962), which features a rather cheesy dragon once again fighting Kerwin Matthews. Harryhausen, however, steered away from dragons for the rest of his films, though the Kraken in his swansong CLASH OF THE TITANS (1981) has a similar penchant for destroying cities and eating princesses.

The next additions to live-action dragon lore were two shoestring offerings from Blighty. MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL (1975) and JABBERWOCKY (1978) were transitional films for Terry Gilliam, as he started to move from the MONTY PYTHON universe to his more personal brand of fantasy cinema. In GRAIL, the dragon is only a Gilliam animation (vanishing when Gilliam has a heart attack), and inflicts less damage than the fearsome killer rabbit. In JABBERWOCKY, the Carroll-inspired creature is a man in a monster suit, facing backwards to give his legs a bird-like bend, and fighting a child in miniature armor. But what the films shortchange in full-fledged monster fierceness, they get right in the surroundings: rugged mountainsides, crumbling cliffs, and an arid landscape swathed in what might be fog or steam.

1981 saw the first major dragon movie for decades, DRAGONSLAYER, a co-production between Paramount and



**FULL POWER:** Films like REIGN OF FIRE visualize dragons in their full, destructive glory, a favor not always accorded them by other moviemakers.

Disney. DRAGONSLAYER was part of a curious cycle of Disney live-action fantasies in the early '80s, which also included TRON, WATCHER IN THE WOODS, RETURN TO OZ and SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. All were unusually dark and menacing pictures for the studio, with limited critical and commercial success, but setting important precedents. DRAGONSLAYER was especially significant, showing how the stop-motion aesthetic could be aided by computer technology.

The film was a career step for animator Phil Tippett, who cut his teeth creating the chess game in STAR WARS and the Tauntaun and Imperial Walkers in EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. For DRAGONSLAYER, Tippett and his team built on techniques used in EMPIRE, creating a process called 'Go-Motion.' As in traditional stop-motion, the dragon was an animated model, shot a frame at a time. But now, the model was hooked to computer-controlled rods, moving the model as each frame was exposed. This resulted in a live-action style 'motion blur,' removing stop-motion jerks and making DRAGONSLAYER's monster fluid, convincing, and very scary. Tippett later moved onto CG animation, working on the likes of JURASSIC PARK and STARSHIP TROOPERS.

## DRAGON-SLAYER

also benefited from a gritty, intelligent, and courageously downbeat script, co-written by producer Hal Barwood and director Matthew Robbins. (Robbins later directed BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED and scripted Guillermo Del Toro's MIMIC.) Like REIGN OF FIRE, it was heavily influenced by JAWS, all the way to featuring a memorable early sequence where a young girl, left as a sacrifice to the monster, is pursued through darkness by the unseen beast until a fireball consumes her. (British locations seem to be mandatory for the best dragon films. DRAGONSLAYER was shot in Wales and the island of Skye; GRAIL in Scotland; and the new REIGN OF FIRE in Ireland's Wicklow mountains.)

DRAGONSLAYER's dark tone clearly puzzled marketers, who used a TITANS-style poster pic of the film's hero Galen (Peter MacNicol) fighting the dragon while the film's princess (Chloe Salaman) cowers in chains. Actually, the princess is killed by the dragon's babies before she meets the main monster, while Galen is defeated and can only stand by as his mentor (Ralph Richardson) blows both dragon and himself to smithereens, ending an age of monsters and magic.

A similarly elegiac tone was tried in DRAGONHEART (1996), in which the computer-

created Draco (designed but not animated by Tippett) is the world's last dragon, hoping only for an afterlife in the stars. However, DRAGONHEART is much less interesting than its predecessor, a fact sometimes blamed on the limitations of CG but as much to do with an erratic script and the decision to anthropomorphize Draco, giving him human-like expressions and tics, plus Sean Connery's voice.

Most fantasy fans try to forget the lamentable DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS (2000), a film unfairly compared to '80s fantasies like KRULL and LEGEND—it's actually far worse, with the CG dragons relegated to a couple of appearances.

An honorable mention should be given to the animated TV movie FLIGHT OF DRAGONS (1986), made by Rankin-Bass after THE HOBBIT and much better. The animation is unremarkable, but the designs are good and the story ingenious, another 'dying days of magic' tale with a present-day man transported to antiquity and given a dragons body by accident. The film anticipates REIGN OF FIRE in offering scientific explanations for dragons (for example, they have internal gas sacks inflated with hydrogen), and there's a superb villain in the evil wizard Omadon, voiced by James Earl Jones.

CFQ

# CFQ Reviews

# CFQ Mail

## FILM RATINGS

- Must see
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Read a Book

### THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES

Screen Gems, 2002, 119 mins. Director: Mark Pellington. With: Richard Gere, Laura Linney, Will Patton.

THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES is a flat, unconvincing movie that is trapped somewhere in the no-man's land labeled "based on a true story." Its main reason for existing is to chronicle a series of close encounters between the folks of a West Virginia town and an eerie, moth-like, human-sized creature of unknown origin.

To make the story more commercially viable—an important consideration when you've got pricey talent on-board—a fictional through-line has been added, concerning a Washington reporter (Richard Gere) who goes to West Virginia to solve the enigma of his wife's premature death. Aiding him in his quest is the insightful, stunningly blonde police chief of the town (Laura Linney). A coy romance develops between the two as they probe the mysteries of a walking, talking moth that can predict the future. I was just as engaged in trying to fathom how an insightful, stunning blonde ended up as the police chief of a West Virginia town.

The film is competently conceived and executed. The bridge collapse at the end is more than that—a rigorously orchestrated

cascade of escalating causes and effects that James Cameron would approve of. Unfortunately, the sequence is the most believable, and frightening, thing in the movie. Because the audience has no idea what's been accurately recreated and what's been made up, THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES ends up as a movie without either the haunting resonance of pure truth or the visceral punch of pure fiction.

● Dennis Kleinman

### QUEEN OF THE DAMNED

Warners, 2002, 101 mins. Director: Michael Rymer. With: Stuart Townsend, Aaliyah, Marguerite Moreau, Vincent Perez.

Director Michael Rymer's version of the Anne Rice novel succeeds and fails. The film works as a big budget vampire movie, but doesn't elicit the strength of Rice's fantasies. Complex and interwoven relationships are drastically simplified; important characters like Maharet just seem to appear when needed; and the ancient Talamasca, an organization that probably influenced Buffy's Watchers, is only used to introduce a Lestat-obsessed Jesse Reeves, played by Marguerite Moreau. The brooding, renegade vampire Lestat (Stuart Townsend in the Tom Cruise role) reawakens in the twenty-first century and decides to become a rock star. Lestat revels in revealing the world of vampires to humans, while simultaneously angering the ranks of the undead. As expected, they rise up against him.

The late Aaliyah was cast as the god-like Queen Akasha, the mother of all vampires. The ac-

tress imbues the character with a nasty, feline quality.

●● Dan Scapperotti

### ROLLERBALL

MGM, 2002, 98 mins. Director: John McTiernan. With: Chris Klein, Jean Reno, LL Cool J, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos.

Director John McTiernan's remake of the 1975 film is a disappointing action/adventure that MGM trimmed to avoid an R-rating. In the opening shots, Jonathan, played by Chris Klein, is introduced as a lunatic, taking part in a senseless luge race down the slopes of San Francisco. The sequence is so harrowing that once Jonathan is recruited into the Rollerball ranks and takes off for Central Asia, the danger level never seems as high.

Since the story is set in contemporary times, the science fiction elements are only that TV ratings are instantaneous. Instead of the world dominating corporations of the original, a slick promoter stages the violent Rollerball contests in a former Soviet Republic. Of course, corporate greed raises its head—as the violence, ratings, and gambling profits grow, so do the deadly strong-arm methods used to keep the players in line, if not necessarily alive.

The film has a direct-to-video feel. The expansive arenas of the 1975 film have been replaced by a congested set of loops and grades that necessitate quick cuts and blurred camera moves to deliver action sequences that seem more montage than straightforward narrative.

○ Dan Scapperotti

## Fred's Legacy

Fred Clarke was a genius. He knew about the tri-genres of science fiction, fantasy, and horror, and, man, he knew how to publish it. He knew about magazine page layouts—how to balance pictures around text, and text around pictures. *Cinefantastique's* fate is now in question. Will it stay afloat? Or will it sink? Can the new heads of the company make the same magic that Clarke did?

I've noticed in the new issues that the pictures aren't balanced around the text. I hate how you outline each picture and textbox with a thin black border. Adding insult to injury, your pictures are eyesores—they're the same, terrible, excessively bright, oversized photos you find in pop pulp like *Entertainment Weekly* and *Premiere*. *CFQ* isn't about "pop" culture, it's about dark, unique, daring, underground, sometimes low-budget filmmaking. I hate to see a quality periodical turning its back on its own identity. *CFQ* had character, with its consistently good writing, slightly dark, behind-the-scenes photographs, oddly-colored, yet beautiful, background pages, and little or NO ADVERTISING (which contributed to it being overpriced, which, by the way, I didn't mind one bit).

I have been loyal: by subscribing regularly, by ordering back issues (which are truly a delight), and (last but not least) by carefully reading the articles and admiring the artistry that went into each page. All along, I made a terrible assumption: that Frederick S. Clarke would live for a very long time. I never wrote him to tell him he was doing a good job. But I should have, because it could've made a difference in his life.

He sure as hell made a difference in mine.

Joey P. Jones

BARBAN65@AOL

[Dan Persons replies: "Entertainment Weekly!?! No need to get insulting, hub.

Seriously, living up to Fred Clarke's enthusiasm and perfectionism is a daunting task. Paradoxical as it may sound, I'm grateful for readers like you who stick by us and bother to let us know when we go off-track. Every magazine needs to evolve, but, in spirit, *CFQ* remains very much Fred's baby. Thanks to you, we'll work never to forget that.]



Mothman Prophecies





**VOL 27 NO 4/5**

Resident TREK expert, Dale Kutzera, provides his behind-the-scenes report on the filming of VOYAGER and DEEP SPACE NINE, with episodes guides, the scoop on the replacement of Genevieve Bu-jold by Kate Mulgrew, cast interviews and a look at design, makeup and special effects. **\$12.00**

**VOL 27 NO 8**

Renowned Italian horror meister Dario Argento's latest shocker THE STENDHAL SYNDROME, and the talented artists and craftsmen behind Argento's twisted shock and makeup effects. Also included is our coverage of the filming of THINNER. **DARIO ARGENTO cover \$6.00**  
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**VOL 28 NO 2**

We take an in-depth look at the making of ESCAPE FROM L.A. the sequel to ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK. Also, a possible series for Captain Sulu (George Takei), the making of DRAGONHEART, TARZAN EPIC ADVENTURES, and Marlon Brando in the H.G. Wells classic, ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU. **\$6.00**

**VOL 28 NO 4/5**

In this double issue, we put DEEP SPACE NINE and VOYAGER under the microscope, with articles featuring cast and crew members, makeup, effects, writers, and episode guides for both series. This issue also includes articles on T-2 3D, TRIL-OGY OF TERROR II, MULTIPLICI-TY, SPACE JAM, and THE X-FILES! David Duchovny. **\$12.00**

**VOL 28 NO 6**

Takes a close look at the making of STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT. Also includes a 30th anniversary look at DARK SHADOWS—featuring actor Johathan Frid—a 40th anniversary look at GODZILLA, plus articles on MARS ATTACKS, Wes Craven's SCREAM, and effects for TV's XENA and HERCULES. **\$6.00**

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Featuring the complete story on the making of Tim Burton's MARS ATTACKS. Includes stories on casting, CGI effects, the Topps trading cards that inspired Burton and more, plus a detailed look at LEXX: DARK ZONE ADVENTURES. Also includes BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA, MICHAEL, and Wes Craven's SCREAM. **\$6.00**

**VOL 28 NO 8**

This issue features our very comprehensive look at the re-release of George Lucas's STAR WARS, including CGI enhanced effects; sound, costume and production design, merchandising, posters and more. This issue also includes stories on SPACE TRUCKERS, PINKY AND THE BRAIN and IMAX's L5: FIRST CITY IN SPACE. **\$6.00**

**VOL 28 NO 9**

Features George Lucas's EMPIRE STRIKES BACK re-release, with emphasis on the ground-breaking special effects and the tireless pioneers that made them possible. Also includes a preview of David Lynch's LOST HIGHWAY, and stories on SPAWN, NEVERENDING STORY, and the TV miniseries ASTEROID. **\$6.00**

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Features SPACE TRUCKERS, Stuart Gordon's working-class space adventure, with stories on special effects, design, makeup effects and more. Also includes ANACONDA, David Cronenberg's CRASH, a preview of MEN IN BLACK, in-depth coverage of David Lynch's LOST HIGHWAY, and our 1996 Year in Review. **\$6.00**

**VOL 28 NO 11**

Features the TV version of Stephen King's THE SHINING, with stories on special effects, directing, King's screenplay and a look back at Stanley Kubrick's version. This issue also features AEON FLUX with episode guide, ANACONDA, Disney's HERCULES, and ABC's 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, with Michael Caine. **THE SHINING cover \$6.00**  
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**VOL 28 NO 12**

Our annual look at the 50 most powerful people in horror, science fiction and fantasy. Also features MEN IN BLACK, BATMAN AND ROBIN, VOLCANO, a preview of THE LOST WORLD (Steven Spielberg's follow-up to Jurassic Park), and an in-depth look at Disney's animated feature, HERCULES. **\$6.00**

**VOL 29 NO 1**

MEN IN BLACK, about illegal extraterrestrial activity. Joel Schumacher's BATMAN AND ROBIN, including interviews with Uma Thurman, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Chris O'Donnell. Previews of STEEL, SPAWN and CONTACT. Also, BUDDY. **MEN IN BLACK cover \$6.00**  
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CONTACT, starring Jodie Foster, based on Carl Sagan's novel, directed by Roger Zemeckis, the story about making contact with alien life. Also, Shaquille O'Neal in STEEL, the working man comic book hero, Oscar-winning animation, STARGATE, THE LOST WORLD. **\$6.00**

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Cover story on the high kicking sequel BLADE 2, plus THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES, THE SCORPION KING, SIX FEET UNDER, THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE, RESIDENT EVIL and the re-release of E.T. with new CGI! **\$8.00**

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Behind-the-scenes coverage of Terry Gilliam's hit movie, TWELVE MONKEYS, including interviews with screenwriters Janet and David Webb Peoples and a profile of Terry Gilliam. Plus, we go on the set of the epic alien-invasion blockbuster, INDEPENDENCE DAY, created by the makers of STARGATE. **\$6.00**

**VOL 27 NO 7**

Our in-depth SPECIES issue features an interview with the Oscar-winning Swiss surrealist, H.R. Giger at his Zurich studio. Also, the inside story on the making of SPECIES, with its hard-fought artistic compromises and legal battles. Also, makeup effects designer Steve Johnson on fabricating Giger's Sil. **\$6.00**

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JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH puppet film auteur Henry Selick brings Roald Dahl's children's fantasy to life. Also Universal's CGI effects epic, DRAGONHEART, and director Kathryn Bigelow on her cyberpunk excursion, STRANGE DAYS. **\$6.00**

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Disney's THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME, with art director Dave Goetz and animator Kathy Zielinski. Also, screenwriter David Koopp on reworking MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE; the return of DR. WHO; screenwriter Jeffrey Boam on updating THE PHANTOM; and Doug Wick on THE CRAFT. **\$6.00**

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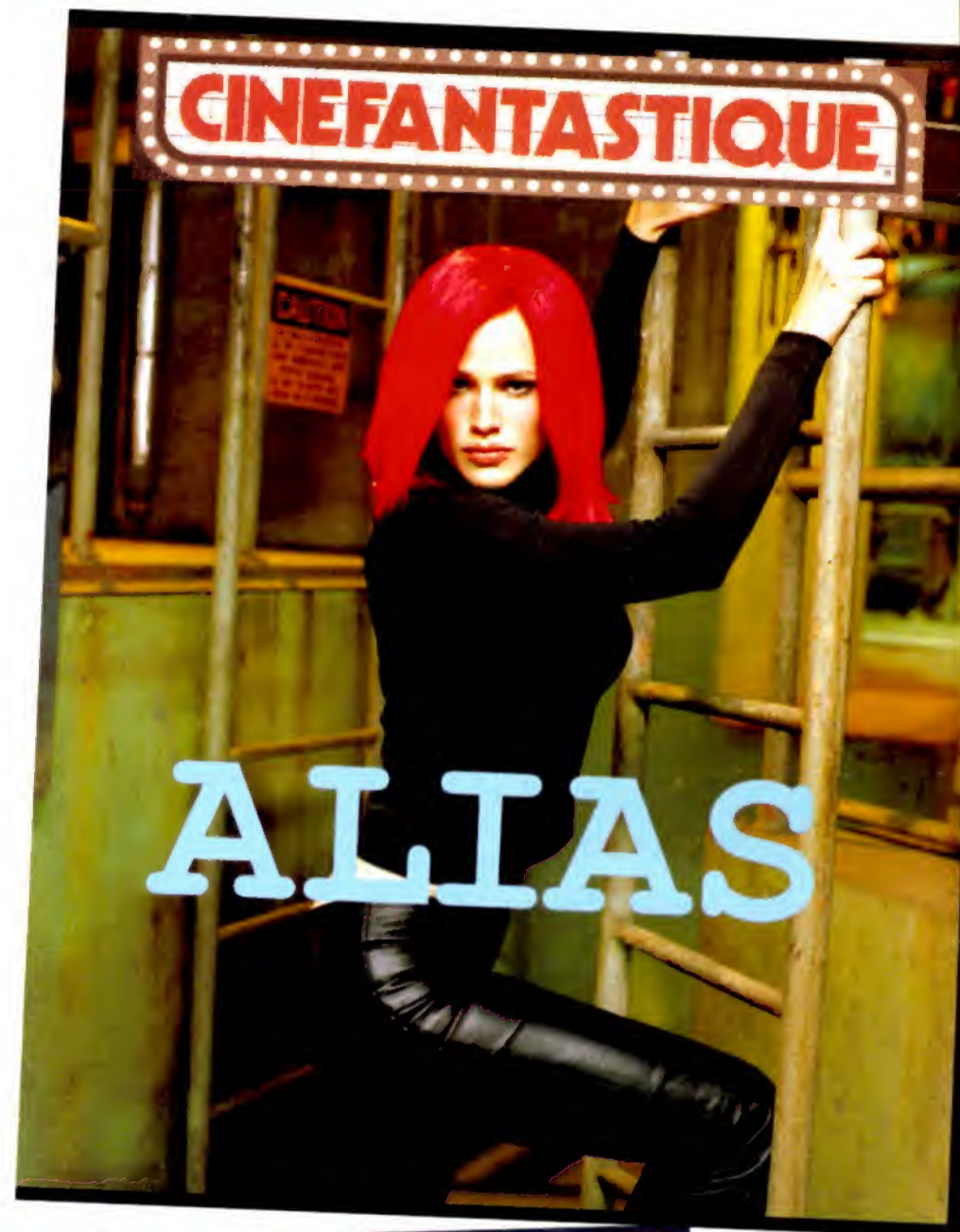
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